

bondwithoutblood

**A HISTORY OF ETHIOPIAN AND NEW WORLD
BLACK RELATIONS, 1896-1991.**



Fikru Negash Gebrekidan



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Africa World Press, Inc.

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Trenton, NJ 08607



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To A.Y.F.

*who more than anyone else cared about
the successful completion of this book*

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introduction

From a New World vantage point, East Africa constitutes the farthest corner on the African continent. Since the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean slave trades flowed eastward to Asia mostly, there were no ancestral ties between the African Horn and the Afro-Atlantic world. Despite the absence of physical or blood kinship, there have been compelling historic and sociocultural ties between Ethiopians and occidental blacks, hence the title of this book, *Bond without Blood*.

The connection between Ethiopia and black America figures prominently in this work. Nevertheless, as subsequent chapters will show, it is with the English-speaking West Indies that Ethiopian connections have proven more enduring and more conspicuous. With the internationalization of reggae music and the growing South-North population influx, some of this Caribbean sentiment has permeated major North American cities. As the subtitle indicates, this book explores the complex interaction between Ethiopia on the one hand and the various pro-Ethiopian groups in the Americas on the other.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Ethiopia invoked the image of the Promised Land. In the same way diasporan Jews looked to Palestine, Zion, as a historic homeland, racial nationalists in the New World sought repatriation to Northeast Africa on cultural, spiritual, and political grounds. Although famine and civil war have tarnished Ethiopia's recent image abroad, the country continues to be celebrated by Rastafarians as an irreplaceable relic of history. Like Sankofa, the mythical bird that never loses sight of its source, Rastafarians find in the Ethiopianist tradition a blueprint for self-revitalization.

Modern Ethiopianism is, however, much more than a quest for an idyllic past. Given the state-of-the-art means of communication, Ethiopia is no longer a far-off abstraction, even if Ethiopian realities often coexist with Ethiopia's mythic image as a racial homeland. Contemporary Ethio-Atlantic racial ties are articulated by tangible historical events. The manifestation of Ethiopian art in reggae, in the Rastafarian deification of Haile Selassie, and in the transplanting of the EOC in the Western Hemisphere are all examples of Ethiopian cultural crossovers. Inversely,

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black American Soul and Jamaican reggae have spiced up Ethiopian urban culture, as have their political heroes and sports icons. In other words, Ethiopians have turned to secular black culture as a mark of cosmopolitan sophistication, while diasporan Africans, particularly West Indians, have turned toward Ethiopia in search of spiritual stimulation.

Bond without Blood constructs the narrative of this fascinating transoceanic nexus with three interwoven themes in mind: pan-African nationalism, repatriation, and cultural cross-fertilization. Central in all this is the evocative role of Ethiopian symbolism, the precursor of modern racial nationalism, in shaping a collective pan-African consciousness. This study, however, pays a more deliberate attention to the dynamics of contemporary Ethiopianism to demonstrate the presence of a two-way transatlantic link. The overall thesis of this book, then, is that twentieth-century Ethiopian and New World black relations are more than a mere psychological preoccupation. East Africa and the black Atlantic, despite great physical distances, continue to impact on each other's awareness through migration, religion, secular culture, as well as through a shared history of anticolonial activism.

The study incorporates archival research, oral interviews, secondary and primary sources, informal discussions, and observations. The archival research was carried out at the headquarters of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In the EOC archives are several dossiers dealing with the church's overseas evangelical activities. The dossiers, consisting mostly of correspondence and receipts of financial remittance from the Patriarchate to its branches in the New World, provide unique insights into Ethio-Caribbean relations in the 1950s and 1960s.

Together with archival materials, interviews with former EOC officials constitute the means by which the history of the Ethio-Caribbean religious ties is constructed. Such interviews were conducted with Ato Abera Jembere of Ethiopia, Archbishop Yesehaq of New York, and Qes Abraham Garnet Springer of Trinidad and Tobago. Informal discussions were also held with the two Ethiopian resident priests in the West Indies: Bishop Thadeus of Trinidad and Aba Zenawi of Tobago.

The Rastafarian settlers in Shashemene, a district in southern Ethiopia, have repeatedly been approached by journalists, academics, and film makers. This has created an interview-fatigue syndrome within the community, as few are now willing to be interviewed formally. Most of the data on the emigré community was derived from written sources, complemented by personal observations and informal talks. Of the Rastafarian immigrants in Addis Ababa, several volunteered for interviews, and their information supplemented the findings in Shashemene.

Written sources were collected over a five-year period. In Ethiopia, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies provided access to an array of national

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publications, including *News and Views* and several Amharic periodicals. In the United States, the library of Michigan State University, where the first draft of this book was completed in the form of a dissertation, became the source for most the primary and secondary materials; while rare sources, such as contemporary newspapers from the 1930s, were acquired from various institutions through the interlibrary loan service.

This study is conceptualized within the overall theoretical framework of Afrocentrism or of Africa-centered narrative. For the most part, African history has been the history of outsiders in Africa: of the Semites and brown-skinned Hamites, whose supposed origins lay in Asia; of the Muslim Arabs; or of white missionaries and explorers. Likewise, the literature on colonial Africa is a study of either the European presence in Africa or the Africans' reactions to it. The Afrocentric theory presents an alternative view to these European and Asian-centered approaches.

Unfortunately, in mainstream academia Afrocentrism has gained recognition more for its controversialism than for its role as a genuine field of learning. Proponents of Afrocentrism have been collectively condemned as romantics or black supremacists, and their works dismissed as "a feel-good history" at best and a celebration of reverse racism at worst. Orlando Patterson, a prominent sociologist at Harvard University, trivializes Afrocentrism as a search for "pageants, pyramids, and princes." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a distinguished American educator, sees Afrocentrism as the Trojan horse of the twentieth century, a threat to racial and cultural unity.¹ Still others, such as the Wellesley College professor Mary Lefkowitz and the British writer Steven Howe, accuse Afrocentrism of having contributed little to actual knowledge because of its preoccupation with a circular debate, namely the racial identity of ancient Egypt.²

For the classicist Lefkowitz and the presidential historian Schlesinger, their anti-Afrocentrism is part of a larger national campaign against the promoting of multiculturalism and racial diversity in American universities and colleges. For many others, opposition to Afrocentrism is more a reflex reaction than a well-thought intellectual rebuttal. Critics have confused Afrocentrism as a belief system with Afrocentrism as a tool of historical analysis. As a belief system, Afrocentrism is no different from Marxism, Zionism or any other form of ideological *isms*, in which dogmas take the place of rational reasoning.

As a historical tool, however, Afrocentrism is the means by which the scholar explains the past with a primary emphasis on race as a deterministic factor. In other words, race relations is to the Afrocentrist what class and gender relations are to labor and feminist historians. True, some leading Afrocentrists have made a name for themselves by engaging in polemical history, namely the cyclical debate as to whether ancient Egypt was black or Mediterranean. What critics forget is that

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such scholars were only responding to a long-held, racially tainted, and scientifically unsubstantiated assumption of ancient Egyptians as non-Africans. In any case, reclaiming Egypt as part of black Africa might be Afrocentric, but Afrocentrism itself is neither about Egypt nor about kings and queens.

Afrocentrism is defined here as a system of thoughts that treats Africans as agents of history in their own right, the movers and shakers of their societies. It is a theory that seeks to understand the role of black peoples in history as givers and takers, as initiators and reactors. Afrocentrism explains the history of black peoples, first, in terms of their own internal social dynamics; second, in terms of the crosscultural experiences that have shaped their collective identity and historical consciousness; and, finally, in terms of the global or external factors whose impact on Africa has for the most part been negative. Afrocentrism acknowledges the impact of the transatlantic slave trade as having reversed Africa's process of evolution toward modernization; but it also recognizes Africa's contributions to world history in various aspects of human endeavor. Modern civilization is, for instance, as much the making of Africans as it is of Europeans and Asians. African labor transformed the plantation complex of the New World into the most profitable economic system ever reported. On the slaves' blood and sweat was thus born the industrial revolution, the basis of Western scientific advancement.³

Transcendent in the chapters ahead is, therefore, the centrality of African historical agency. Chapter 1 examines Ethiopian representations in ancient and modern intellectual traditions and synthesizes the perennial debates in Ethiopian historiography. Chapter 2 traces the evolution of the concept of Ethiopianism as well as constructs the history of the initial phase of Ethiopian and New World African encounters.

Chapters 3 through 6 investigate the Italo-Ethiopian war as a milestone in the rise of modern black nationalism. This section explores the responses to the war by African, Caribbean, and African American intellectuals, from which emerged the synthesis of a pan-African ideology. While chapters 3 and 4 take a bird's-eye view of Africa and the New World, chapter 5 deals specifically with Ethiopia in the context of the Italo-Ethiopian war and its role as an instrument of racial consciousness. Chapter 6 treats the Africanization process of Ethiopian national identity, one of its byproduct being the transformation of Addis Ababa as a major center of continental politics.

Chapter 7 constructs the history of the small West Indian emigré community in Shashemene. It shows how the biblical concept of the Promised Land was reinterpreted, or racialized, so as to reflect the Rastafarian perception not only of Ethiopia as an African Zion but of the West as "Babylon," or a land of racial captivity. Also discussed in this section is how the Rastafarians have reconciled certain contradictory

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imageries: the association of Ethiopia with famine and poverty on the one hand and the recognition of Ethiopia as a homeland and an icon of anticolonial struggle on the other.

The last two chapters discuss the transplantation process of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the West Indies. In his seminal work *Africa and Africans*, John Thornton explains New World Africanisms more as a phenomenon of transformation than of continuity. In highlighting some of the contemporary Ethiopian religious crossovers in the Americas, chapters 8 and 9 dispute Thornton's straightjacket thesis, thereby reinstating Africa's ongoing significance to the acculturation process of the Afro-Atlantic world.⁴

The historiographical premise of *Bond without Blood* is multifold. Historians have often considered Ethiopia at best as a "unique" case in Africa or at worst as a peripheral appendage to the Middle East. By revealing the historic links between Ethiopia and the black world at large, this work locates Ethiopian history within the cosmos of African and African American history.

Similarly, the study's interest in Ethiopian religious crossovers adds a new angle to the discussion on African continuities. Traditionally, the point of departure for the study of New World Africanisms has been West Africa, the ancestral homeland of most diasporan blacks. The inquiry into the cultural ties between East Africa and the Afro-Atlantic world casts a new dimension to the hitherto West Africa-centered approach. In so doing, the study not only broadens the geographic dimension of this particular discourse, it also paves the way for similar comparative studies across space and time.

Thus far, there have been at least three major works exploring the pan-African responses to the Italo-Ethiopian war in the years between 1935 and 1941. *Bond without Blood* builds on these works and contributes to the discussion of the aforesaid conflict as a watershed in modern black nationalism. Beyond that, it tries to present a more complete account of Ethiopian relations with occidental blacks by inquiring into postwar social and political developments and their effects on intercontinental race relations.⁵

Finally, this book can be read as an intellectual history or a history of ideas. What is strikingly evident in this text is the overlapping nature of history, ideas, and fantasy, almost to the point of interchangeability. Where does one draw the line between the real and the imagined? Is the preoccupation with Ethiopia as the Promised Land a vision or a fantasy? How is African repatriation different from the return to the ancestral land by other dispersed groups, for example the Jewish aliyah or the ingathering of ethnic Germans? Rather than attempt to answer them, this book provokes such questions, and in so doing reveals the catalytic role of

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symbols and ideals in social movements and the extent to which history can be galvanized by such abstract forces.

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The recognition of African history as a legitimate academic field is a post World War II phenomenon. This of course does not mean that there were no historical writings on Africa before the twentieth century. If one uses geography alone for purposes of category, Ethiopianists can discern three types of historical sources pertinent to the previous centuries. From Ethiopia itself came hagiographies and royal chronicles based on local sources such as eye-witness or purported eyewitness accounts. Europe gave rise to a group of Orientalists or, to be more specific, Semiticists, whose writings placed Ethiopian history within the larger framework of Middle Eastern studies. Finally, there were a wide array of ephemeral commentaries on the Ethiopian past by New World black writers, much of whose supporting evidence came from classical sources such as the Bible.

While an Ethiopianist can in theory draw on prodigious sources from three continents, the general tendency among historians of modern Ethiopia is to rely primarily on European sources. Since the use of Ge'ez, an ancient language with its own scripts, and from which evolved the various tongues spoken in present-day central and northern Ethiopia, is confined to the clergy, old church manuscripts and royal chronicles are generally beyond the direct reach of secularly trained historians. Likewise, the type of overseas universities that aspiring Ethiopianists attended, as well as the kind of mentors they had in such institutions, explains a great deal why black American and West Indian worldviews made little inroad into mainstream Ethiopian historiography. The European universities, where a majority of the first generation of Ethiopianists received their training, did little more than provide a pedantic glimpse into the African past, while most of those who went to North America ended up in elitist white schools where interaction with blacks was minimal.

The result of such lopsided academic apprenticeship is the predisposition of the first generation of Ethiopianists toward a European-centered worldview. Monotheism, literary tradition, and political centralization defined the European notion of high civilization. Since the Axumite past manifested these traits, and since Africa was regarded as a place where nothing of significance transpired without the help of outside

agents, the northern half of Ethiopia was seen as more Middle Eastern than African and therefore worthy of scholarly attention. The negative setback of such elitist narrative has had ripple effects on national politics and identity. Failure to strive toward an all-inclusive national historiography disfranchised many Ethiopians from the historical script, providing the political framework against which secessionist and deconstructionist discourses were later formulated. Some recent works with pan-Ethiopian and continental perspectives have questioned the fundamentals of a foreign-inspired Ethiopian historiography; but, given the persistence of age-old assumptions, such themes remain the exception rather than the rule.

Ethiopia in the Classics

The name “Ethiopia” now refers exclusively to the country in northeast Africa, commonly known as Abyssinia in the past. In earlier times the word Ethiopia, at least when applied by foreign writers, often alluded to black Africa in general and to the Nile basin in particular.

Indeed, the word Ethiopia has a long yet not always consistent pedigree in the Western intellectual tradition. In the Homeric epics of the eighth century before the common era, Ethiopia and Ethiopians are mentioned several times. These early Greek sources, nevertheless, obstruct more than enlighten especially in terms of African geography. In Homer’s *Iliad*, the Ethiopians are described as the “farthermost men, some dwelling where the sun rises and others where it sets.” The Greeks may have been vague about the location of the Ethiopians but nonetheless spoke of them in superlatives. Ethiopia, which in the Hellenic language meant sun-burned, symbolized remoteness and exoticism on the one hand and piety and virtuousness on the other, hence Homer’s allusion to the “blameless Ethiopians” as the people most favored by the Olympians.¹

In subsequent centuries, Greek writers expounded on the “blameless Ethiopian” image. Herodotus, the renowned Greek historian, traveled in Egypt as far south as Elephantine and provided the first vivid picture of Ethiopians, whom he described as dark-skinned and wooly-haired. Writing in the fifth century B.C.E., he situated the Ethiopian empire in the region south and southeast of Egypt (present-day northeast Africa), with its capital at Meroe, a two-month journey upstream. He described the people as long lived, tall, and good looking, adding that only the tallest and strongest among them was fit to be king. Such accounts should not be dismissed as purely fanciful, for Herodotus also wrote of the “cave-dwelling Troglodyte Ethiopians,” whose lifestyle resembled that of hunters and gatherers.²

Bits of information about black Africans continued to permeate Greco-Roman literature, but the dualistic portrait of Ethiopians did not change. Diodorus Siculus, who claimed to have interviewed Ethiopian

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ambassadors during his Egyptian sojourn in the first century B.C.E., made a distinction between savage and civilized Ethiopians. The former lived in the natural state of man, knew of no body garment, grew long nails, and lacked any decorous behavior. Their civilized counterparts, by contrast, not only exuded a high level of organized existence from their capitals at Napata and Meroe, but it was to them that Egyptians owed their religious customs and cultural practices. Therefore, not only the Ethiopians considered themselves pioneers of established religion and religious rituals but also saw themselves as the most righteous of men, observed Diodorus.³

Although theologians like St. Augustine associated the name Ethiopia with barbarity and paganism, the image of the woolly-haired Africans as devout and “blameless” would continue to resonate among some commentators of early Christendom. In the sixth century, when Christian Axum was at the zenith of its power, Stephanus of Byzantium recalled the depiction of Ethiopians as originators of organized religion, while his contemporary Lactantius Placidus reiterated the Hellenists’ portrait of Ethiopians as the most just and pious of men.⁴

The word Ethiopia, or its Hebrew equivalent Cush, appears in the Bible about forty times. In the Scriptures, as in the Hellenistic writings, the name Ethiopia often evokes a vague georacial construction subject to varying interpretations. On one occasion, in Jeremiah 13:23, attention is drawn to the Ethiopians’ skin pigmentation in unambiguous terms: “Can the Ethiopian change the color of his skin, or the leopard his spots?” On another, in Numbers 12:1-16, we read that Moses chose an Ethiopian woman for a wife and that his sister, Miriam, contracted leprosy as God’s punishment for her disapproval of the matrimony. In Amos 9:7, reference is made to the Ethiopians to show the inherent equality of human beings in the eyes of God. The Israelites, despite a special covenant with Yahweh, disobeyed God repeatedly and still considered themselves His chosen people. Unlike the Israelites, who saw themselves as the center of the scriptural world, the Ethiopians constituted a distant and remote nation, and yet they too held a special place in God’s grace, for the host of Israel was the host of humanity. This universalistic perception of God as one who transcends race and nationality is what prompts Amos to rebuke his countrymen: “Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, o the children of Israel?”⁵

After embracing Christianity in the fourth century, northeast Africa became more familiar to Western religious circles as attested by the correspondence between the courts of Byzantium and Axum. A century later the Bible was translated from Syriac into Ge’ez by Syrian refugees, and, perhaps inspired by relevant scriptural passages, the Axumite converts began to refer to themselves as Ethiopians and to their country as Ethiopia. So, the Greek word, once noted for its vagueness and ambiguity,

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had by the second half of the first millennium taken on a life of its own, referring to a particular locale with a defined political entity.⁶

A development that had an equally lasting consequence to northeast Africa during this period was the rise of Islam. Ethiopia held a special significance to the nascent religion. When persecuted by the pre-Islamic authorities in Mecca for their revolutionary religious belief, some of Mohammed's early converts fled to Axum where the king received them warmly as his guests. In 622 C.E., as the level of persecution in Mecca increased, Mohammed and most of his companions also left for Medina where, unlike in their hometown, they found refuge and toleration. The Ethiopian group later sailed back to Arabia to join Mohammed's triumphant return to Mecca, but its Hijra or flight to Axum would stand out as an important chapter in early Islamic history.

In light of the amicable reception that the fugitives found in Axum, Mohammed is said to have exempted Ethiopia from Jihad, Islam's holy war: "Leave the Abyssinians in peace so long as they do not take the offensive."⁷ In theory, the decree accorded the highland nation a special status, thereby averting a major Islamic onslaught on Ethiopia until the sixteenth century. In reality, the relationship between the Christian state and its Muslim neighbors was characterized by uneasy truce and delicate coexistence. Aggressive or expansionist tendencies by either party, when combined with an acute commercial rivalry, could at any time trigger a protracted frontier warfare lasting for decades.⁸

Land of Prester

By the early Middle Ages, European knowledge about Ethiopia had improved little. If anything, it had regressed, shrouded into further obscurity and fanciful mythology. As in the Bible and the Greek classics, Ethiopia again became a fluid georacial entity in the minds of medieval Europe. Between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries, the name Ethiopia was associated with the legend of Prester John and his fabulous Christian empire. Following the Ottoman Turks' control of the trade route between Europe and the Orient in the mid-fifteenth century, a number of European explorers were dispatched in search of the lustrous Prester, whose military assistance they were to solicit for the fight against Islam. Although some of the adventurers did indeed reach East Africa, little was heard of them back in Europe. Either the Ethiopians found their artisan skills too valuable to let them go, or they willingly settled in Ethiopia, having run out of provisions for the arduous journey back home.⁹

Only when the Abyssinians realized that the power balance had tilted in favor of their Muslim neighbors, because of the latter's access to Turkish firearms, did they feel the need for a military alliance with Europe. In 1509 Ethiopia's regent queen, Eleni, sent a message to Lisbon proposing a joint military venture between the two countries.¹⁰ The opening of a sea route

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to India only decades earlier had by then diminished Ethiopia's strategic significance, but the prospect of being the first European to establish an embassy in the court of the fabled potentate was too great a privilege for the Portuguese to ignore.¹¹

The Lusitanian embassy arrived in Ethiopia in 1521. It comprised three individuals, among them the gifted chronicler Fr. Francisco Alvares, whose published accounts form much of our knowledge about sixteenth-century Ethiopia.

From Alvares' portrait of the highland villages as "big towns" and "populous," or of the land as fertile and rich in husbandry, it is clear that Ethiopia and Portugal enjoyed a comparable level of development, and the Jesuits manifested no signs of racial superiority on the basis of a more advanced economy.¹² To the contrary, awe and veneration characterized the sojourners' attitude toward the Prester. The first request by the travelers on reaching Ethiopia was for permission to speak with the emperor directly, to "kiss his hand" and to give "great thanks to God for having fulfilled their desires in bringing Christians together with Christians."¹³

From a modern-day perspective, that the early Ethio-Portuguese encounters were free from racial considerations may seem unusual; however, a similar investigation into the Kongo-Portuguese relations during the early phase of the transatlantic contact also reveals the absence of racial bifurcation. Racial awareness and racism were a more recent phenomenon, a by-product of the industrial era and of the transatlantic slave trade. As Winthrop Jordan has pointed out in his study of the history of white supremacy in America, religion, not race, defined the West's collective consciousness during the pre-industrial era. During the long history of hostilities between Islam and Christianity, Europeans regarded their coreligionists in Africa and Asia as kindred spirits and potential military allies. Such cultural fluidity together with the legend of Prester John made it easy for Ethiopia to be fancied as the farthest outpost of Christendom where the banner against Islam was held high.¹⁴

The religious camaraderie between African and European Christians is best illustrated by Lisbon's decision to send its soldiers to Ethiopia to help thwart an all-but-successful Muslim invasion. This was in direct response to the Jihad of the 1530s, conducted by Somali and Dankali forces led by their able general, the notorious Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi, popularly known as Ahmed Gagn or Ahmed the left handed. Backed by Turkish soldiers and firearms, Gagn's forces had overrun most of the Christian highlands, causing much material destruction and many forcible conversions. In a final effort to save the country, Emperor Lebna Dingel appealed to his European coreligionists for military aid. Although the fugitive king died in 1540 uncertain of his country's future, more than four hundred Portuguese soldiers arrived the next year, giving solace to the otherwise scattered and disparaged Christian army. While half the

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European musketeers were waylaid and killed by the Muslim forces not far from the Eritrean coast, the other half made it to the thick of the battle in the northwestern plateau, where their superior firepower held the day. Gagn died in 1543 in the most decisive engagement of the war near Lake Tana, after which his dispirited army retreated to the eastern lowlands.¹⁵

Portuguese military intervention marked both the climax and the turning point in Ethio-Iberian relations. Until that time, the Portuguese had regarded the Abyssinian state as first among equals. The fact that a few hundred Portuguese troops were able to accomplish in a short while what the Ethiopians could not in centuries ended Europe's militaristic infatuation with the Prester, hence Ethiopia's deflated image abroad. The same period saw the questioning of Ethiopian religious orthodoxy. Jeronimo Lobo, a Jesuit traveler of the 1620s, argued that the Ethiopians did not belong to the "true religion" because of their rejection of Christ's vicar on earth: the pope. Despite their church's heresy, Lobo hastily added, the people were unrivaled in their piety and virtue, and did not have "to envy any other nation where the purity of faith is of greater perfection and excellence."¹⁶ Lobo's impression characterized the sentiments of contemporary Portuguese travelers who, while admiring the devoutness of the Ethiopians, were quick to denounce the Monophysite Church as heretical or un-Catholic.

The Portuguese intervention provoked mixed responses on the Ethiopian side. On the one hand, having played a crucial role in the defeat of Gagn, the Iberians were celebrated as national heroes and, in gratitude for their service, were allowed to stay in the country, exercising a disproportionate religious and political influence. Their presence, in effect, transformed Ethiopia into a Portuguese vassal, a fact made more apparent by Emperor Susenyos' embrace of Catholicism at the closing of the sixteenth century.

On the other hand, outside the royal court rose resentment against the newcomers and their privileged status. The Orthodox church saw the Jesuits, because of their aggressive proselytizing, as a major threat. The fact that many armed Portuguese resorted to capturing and selling Ethiopians, Christians and non-Christians alike, as slaves to the Middle East made the whites all the more unpopular.¹⁷ Finally, in 1632, the backlash against the strangers sparked a potent religious nationalism, forcing the abdication of Susenyos in favor of his son Facilidas. To preempt an imminent civil war, Facilidas ordered the ejection of the foreigners and the proscription of their faith, thus the end to the Portuguese interlude.

The Pious and the Savage

The first European to visit Abyssinia after the expulsion of the Jesuits was Charles Poncet, a French medical doctor and a long-time resident of Cairo. Following an invitation from Emperor Iyasu I, Poncet arrived in

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Gondar in 1699, and would stay there for nine months, seeking a cure for the emperor's genetic skin ailment. Like his Portuguese predecessors, in his writings Poncet reinforced Ethiopia's association with religious piety, thus his reference to Gondar as home to "a hundred churches."¹⁸ The French doctor found Iyasu particularly impressive, describing him as a great enthusiast for the natural sciences and as an extraordinary just and fair-minded ruler. Perhaps because of his familiarity with the less tranquil urban lifestyle of Cairo or Paris, Poncet noted with amazement the absence of rampant crime and social unrest in Gondar: "It is somewhat surprising that, the Ethiopians being so lively and passionate . . . we scarcely ever hear of murder or of those enormous crimes which fill us with horror."¹⁹

Few could have disagreed more with Poncet's image of the just and virtuous Ethiopians than the next visitor to the country, the Scotsman James Bruce. There were three factors that distinguished Bruce from earlier visitors. First, he was the first Protestant to set foot in Ethiopia. Second, he belonged to a radically different socioeconomic era, the age of the industrial revolution. Third, unlike the Iberians who experienced a long history of domination by the darker Moors, the British possessed no extensive interracial interactions with non-Europeans. Because of relative cultural proximity, the Portuguese could partially relate to the institutions of feudal Ethiopia and its Orthodox church. Despite an outgoing personality, the provincial Bruce could not transcend his own sense of otherness and saw his stay in Ethiopia through the myopic lenses of an eighteenth-century British man.

Similarly, the arrival of Bruce in Abyssinia in 1769 coincided with the collapse of the central government there. The rise of several pretenders to the Solomonic throne resulted in the plunging of the country into a depressing period of fragmentation and civil war known as the Era of Princes.²⁰ Considering the sad state of anarchy and violence to which the country had sunk, Bruce's portrait of Ethiopia as a Hobbesian society was not without some truth, even if exaggerated. Customs that the Scottish explorer found particularly repulsive included the punishing of criminals and religious heretics by plucking their eyes out, cutting out their tongues and, above all, putting them to death by hanging or stoning and leaving their bodies unburied.²¹

Nothing aroused as much sensation in Europe as did Bruce's lavish description of the Ethiopian raw beef diet, "a cannibal banquet," as he dubbed it. After bleeding it from the throat, the animal (a cow or a bull) is skinned alive. "All the flesh on the buttocks is then cut off in solid, square pieces, without bones or much effusion of blood; and the prodigious noise the animal makes is a signal for the company to sit down to table."²²

The same custom of eating raw meat had been reported a century earlier by Portuguese travelers in a matter-of-fact way. Bruce's grotesque account, however, so sensationalized the practice that few found it

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credulous. A story is told in which Bruce, at a dinner party back in England, was asked if he saw any musical instruments in Ethiopia. "I think I saw one *lyre* there," he hesitatingly answered. "Yes, there is one less since he left the country," another guest shot back, cleverly alluding to the general perception of the traveler as untrustworthy.²³

The name Abyssinia had, by nineteenth century, become synonymous with violence and debauchery, especially as writings by subsequent travelers corroborated Bruce's findings of decades earlier. "The skeptic in Europe, who still withholds his credence from Bruce's account of an Abyssinian brind feast, would have been edified by the sight now presented on the royal meadow," a British traveler in Shoa reported in the 1840s. "Crowds swarmed around each sturdy victim of the knife, and impetuously rushing with a simultaneous yell, seized horns, and legs, and tail. . . . Groups of feasting savages might now be seen seated on the wet grass in every direction, greedily munching and bolting the raw repast."²⁴

A trip to Abyssinia thus became a trip in search of the exotic, the wild, and the absurd. In trying to meet these expectations, travelers to the Horn bombarded their readers with real and imagined Abyssinian eccentricities. Cultural practices, either random or confined to a particular locale, were blown out of proportion. Thenceforth came exaggerated reports of Ethiopian battlefield orgies such as the practice of emasculating fallen enemies or of castrating them if caught alive.²⁵ Likewise, reports also circulated that singled out Ethiopians as religious fanatics who, among other things, cut the lips and noses of smokers and snuffers.²⁶

By mid-nineteenth-century both the classical and the medieval perceptions of Ethiopia had faded, superseded by a new portrait of the country as nominally Christian at best or as heathen and barbarous at worst. In the words of Bruce's biographer, Francis Head, Abyssinia was a nation of "the wooly-headed negro, who there, as in all regions of the world, finds that his neighbor and fellow-creature, pagan as well as Christian, is a more cruel, cunning, relentless inveterate enemy, than the hyena and savage beasts of the field."²⁷

As Europe became increasingly aware of the Ethiopians' purported unrivaled brutality to man and beast, colonial intervention in the Horn found compelling moral justification. An upstart Italy rose to the occasion by sending an army of more than fourteen thousand men to northeast Africa. Even with what seemed to be the largest colonial expedition to the continent hitherto, Italy had miscalculated Emperor Menilek's resilience. On 1 March 1896, Menilek's larger though poorly equipped army routed the Italian colonial mission at the battle of Adwa, a district in northern Ethiopia. Rome's colonial ambition thus ended in a humiliating defeat leaving it with a bruised national ego. For a country newly united after centuries of internal feud and division, the defeat became a traumatic

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national fiasco overnight, resulting in the resignation of Prime Minister Francesco Crispi.²⁸

Italy's defeat at Adwa had wider racial repercussions. Lest Western shibboleth about race and race etiquette become meaningless, European social Darwinists had to scramble for a plausible biological explanation for the unexpected turn of events in East Africa. Abyssinians were described as black Caucasians, bestowed with generous genetic traits hitherto considered exclusively European: intelligent, handsome, courageous, persevering, proud, and religious. Adwa, in a sense, revived antiquated medieval conjurations in which the Ethiopians were seen as having more in common with their European coreligionists than with their "pagan" or Muslim neighbors. The once savage Abyssinia now became a fortress of Christianity, and its ancient civilization and literature aroused renewed interest among European philologists.²⁹

For the oppressed masses in Asia and Africa, Adwa had a totally different meaning. Ethiopia's victory over Italy, as would Japan's triumph over Russia nine years later, ignited the torch of anti-European nationalism. Adwa would become a pan-African cause célèbre, a metaphor for racial pride and anticolonial defiance, living proof that skin color or hair texture bore no significance on intellect or character. Such was Adwa's inspirational importance to blacks that several church denominations in South Africa and the United States took on the name Ethiopia or Abyssinia. Ethiopia also invoked the image of the Promised Land to a number of nationalistic-minded blacks, some of whom migrated and settled in East Africa.³⁰

By the early twentieth century, there were thus two tailor-made concepts of Ethiopia that Europeans could choose from as political whims dictated. During the 1930 coronation of Ras Tafari as Emperor Haile Selassie, for example, the hundreds of white dignitaries in Addis Ababa could seek consolation in the Caucasoid image of Ethiopia to convince themselves that their host, although swarthy in complexion, was not a black African. Ethiopia may have belonged to Africa geographically, but its peoples constituted a race more Middle Eastern than African.

At the subliminal level, however, the perception of Ethiopia as "barbarous" and "mysterious" still held great sway on public opinion. One book published in 1927 bore the title of *Savage Abyssinia* and was reprinted eight years later with an equally ominous heading as *Unknown Ethiopia: New Light on Darkest Abyssinia*.³¹

Negative publications like those cited above, one may add here, were particularly popular among European antislavery lobbyists. By drawing attention to the institution of slavery in Ethiopia, leading antislavery voices tried to block the country's entry into the League of Nations. The practice of forced labor on the colonial territories was much more brutal and widespread than Ethiopian domestic servitude, but the same

self-ordained pro-African advocates never challenged the legitimacy of the British or of the French colonial presence in the continent. On the contrary, European antislavery activists and Italian fascist operatives collaborated in turning the issue of slavery in Ethiopia into an urgent moral crusade. The “civilizing mission,” the natural complement to such pseudohumanitarian rhetoric, would thus provide an ideal pretext for Italy to intervene in Ethiopia militarily in the name of bringing peace and civilization.³²

Beginning of Modern Historiography

After World War II there was a leap in terms of what Western academia knew about Ethiopia, ironically thanks to the extensive research that Italian scholars had undertaken during the five-year fascist interlude. The first international Ethiopian studies conference was in fact held in Rome in 1959, a testament to the ingenuity of Italian scholarship. Although Western understanding of Ethiopia had become more complex by then, the pious-savage dichotomy still dominated postwar European thinking.

On the one hand, Westerners discovered an apparent projection of themselves in Ethiopia. Ethiopia possessed a rich Judeo-Christian heritage and a long recorded history dating back to biblical times, while its reform-minded monarchy compared to the leadership of Meiji Japan in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, following the 1974 overthrow of the Haile Selassie government by a Marxist junta, the same country came to signify apocalyptic famine and perpetual civil strife. The 1984-85 drought rendered many sub-Saharan countries recipients of massive Western food aid. Yet, for reasons of Cold War propaganda, the Western media concentrated its attention on Ethiopia so as to underscore the bankruptcy of communism in the third world. For others, the televised images of human suffering in Ethiopia revived the colonial perception of Africans as dependent and childlike. The Ethiopian spectacle in fact became an ideal reference point for white racists who argued that Africans were better off under colonialism, pointing to the higher living standard of blacks in apartheid South Africa in contrast with the self-ruled but poverty-ridden Horn of Africa.³³

This dual perception of Ethiopia (at times civilized, at times antithetical to civilization) is what defines the perennial academic debate in Ethiopian history. Ethiopian historiography has taken the form of a Manichaean discourse: Caucasian or Negroid, backward or civilized, ancient or recent, transplanted or indigenous, feudal or nonfeudal. These contentions in turn have shaped the basis of the major historical interpretations on Ethiopia: Semiticist, deconstructionist, and secessionist.

Conti-Rossini and the Semiticist School

Most of the pre-1974 historical writings on Ethiopia can best be categorized as a European-centered Semiticist historiography. In the same manner that the Hamites became the purveyors of iron tools and centralized polities to the African hinterland, the Semites were credited for jump starting one of the continent's most enduring civilizations. A central theme shared among the Ethiopianists of this genre is the celebration of the country's classical past: the glory of Axum, the triumph of Christianity over Islam, and the survival of Ethiopian independence in the face of repeated colonial onslaughts.

Semiticist scholarship, which sought to explain ancient Ethiopian history in terms of external factors, served a double purpose. First, it interpreted Ethiopian history in such a way as to make it palatable to a larger Western audience. Second, because of its assumption of the European value system as the universal standard, it purveyed a European worldview to Ethiopia and made future Ethiopian scholarship dependent on the Western mode of thought.

As mentioned earlier, the myth of Prester John had elevated Ethiopia's standing in medieval Europe. Semiticist historiography, pioneered by the seventeenth-century German philologist Hiob Ludolf, took this medieval construction a step further. Analysis of linguistic similarities between Ge'ez and Arabic underscored Ludolf's theory that the Abyssinians were semitic immigrants from Asia.³⁴ His hypothesis was reaffirmed by nineteenth and twentieth-century Orientalists, among them Germans August Dillmann and Enno Littmann; Britons Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, G. W. B. Huntingford, and C. F. Beckingham; Polish-born Edward Ullendorff; America's sociologist Donald Levine; and, most importantly, Italy's Carlo Conti-Rossini.³⁵

Conti-Rossini appreciated Ethiopia's diverse ethnic makeup and called the country a "museum of people." Beyond that, Conti-Rossini was a staunch racist whose Semiticist simulation was anchored in the nineteenth-century Hegelian worldview. Like the leading social anthropologist of his time, his research presupposed outside migration to be the main antecedent for state formation in Africa. Since Eritrea was an Italian colony, his studies focused on northern Ethiopia, whose material culture and linguistic roots he traced to Southern Arabia. The result of his extensive field work in the region, *Storia d'Etiopia*, became the bible on the Axumite period with a profound influence on subsequent scholarship.

Monroe and Jones, Yuri Kobishchanov, Francis Anfray, Tadesse Tamrat, and John Trimingham, to mention but a few, have expounded on Conti-Rossini's Semitic hypothesis by drawing a direct axis between South Arabian and Axumite civilizations.³⁶ According to these disciples, at least four major phases are discernable in the rise and fall of ancient Axum.

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First, around the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., a large-scale migration resulted in the settlement of northeast Africa by the Sabeans, Saba being one of the Yemenite kingdoms in Arabia. The Sabeans brought with them an advanced economy and political system that transformed the coastal village of Adulis into a major commercial port, the inhabitants conversant with Hellenistic culture and the Jewish faith.³⁷

Second, instead of confining themselves to the coastal region, the colonial immigrants moved up on the Axumite plateau, attracted by its milder climate and more fertile land. There, they intermarried with the Kushitic-speaking natives on whom they superimposed their Semitic tongue and material culture. They introduced the art of metallurgy and sculpture, various domestic animals and plants, agricultural and irrigation techniques, a writing system, religious and political institutions, and in so doing turned Axum into a regional "diffusion center."³⁸

Third, during the first six centuries in the common era, Axum reached its zenith as a major maritime power. This period saw the transformation of the Sabeian cultural crossovers into distinctly Axumite innovations, as in the modification of the boustrophedon, the ploughlike Sabeian writing system, into standard Ge'ez script. The two world religions, Christianity and Islam, found their way into the Horn at this time, setting the stage for the subsequent internecine religious conflict that sparked Axum's southward flight.³⁹

Fourth, the orientation away from the Arabian Sea in the last quarter of the first millennium marked the end of the Axumite golden age. By the tenth century the Sabeian ruling class was ousted by the Kushitic Zagwe Dynasty, which in turn was overthrown by the Solomonid Dynasty, a Shoan family of purported biblical roots.

Encircled by hostile Islam and cut off from any meaningful contacts with the outside world, Ethiopia under the new rulers entered a period of decline parallel to Europe's descent into the "dark ages." "Encompassed by the enemies of their religion," wrote the eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon, "the Ethiopians slept a thousand years forgetful of the world by whom they were forgotten."⁴⁰

Although Gibbon's thesis no longer holds true given some of the recent ground-breaking works on medieval Ethiopian history, still there is much confusion about the territorial extent of ancient Ethiopia. In the hope of retaining a consistent and linear narrative, Semiticists have in fact resorted to geographical arbitrarism and divided early northeast Africa into two Ethiopias: Axumite Ethiopia and Nubian Ethiopia or Kush. The apparent distinction between two ancient empires serves a central purpose, as it allows the projection of Axum as an externally inspired civilization in contrast to the Africa-oriented Nubian sister state.⁴¹

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The above dichotomy has been presented as fact despite the absence of any recorded territorial delineation. If anything, both oral and written documents imply an overlapping history not just between the two regions but across the entire Nile valley. According to Sergew Hable-Selassie, Axum, Nubia, and Egypt shared similar techniques of boat making, used the same terminologies for words such as dwarf and incense, and their women wore beads and decorative eye-paint known as kohl. Sergew also alluded to a burial site in northern Ethiopia said to be the final resting ground of a Pharaoh, while pointing out that some of the earlier rulers in northern Ethiopia were known with the Sudanic names of Noba and Soba.⁴²

The territory of Ethiopia, as the ancients knew it, was vast and vague and certainly lacked defined boundaries. Rather than constituting two distinct empires, it is more likely that both Axum and Nubia belonged to a loosely federated political structure, perhaps tied by complementary commercial interests. When Nubia, with its capitals at Napata and Meroe, was the more powerful of the two, Axum paid homage and sent tributes; but when Meroe's fortunes fell, the highland province did not hesitate to take matters into its hands. Such reversal of roles resulted, at least on one occasion, in the settling of old scores, as one may conclude from the fourth-century Axumite stela, whose inscription recounts King Ezana's successful military expedition against rebellious Nubia.⁴³

Ironically, the very same school that frowns at Axumite-Nubian cultural intermarriage has been more than eager to explain the rise of the interlacustrine kingdoms in terms of diffusion from the Horn: the Hamitic factor. The Hamitic myth, a variant of the Semitic thesis, was closely associated with British social anthropology, C. G. Seligman and Harry Johnston being the best known proponents. The theory claims that some of the peoples of east and central Africa, namely those with divine kingship traditions and with relatively sharper physical features, descended from Asiatic immigrants from northeast Africa.⁴⁴

However long since discredited, the Hamitic thesis has continued to operate as a marker of ethnic identity with grave political repercussions. A classic case is in Rwanda where the supposedly taller and brown-skinned Tutsi believe in an Ethiopian origin and see themselves as the natural ruling aristocrats. Although both Tutsi and Hutu shared the same language and culture, perceived physical distinctions of the above nature were stressed and social hierarchies further stratified by German and Belgian officials through the classic colonial dictum of divide and rule. Following Belgium's withdrawal from Rwanda after independence, the competition for resources and political dominance would on two occasions escalate into a full-fledged ethnic civil war claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands.⁴⁵

Although nowhere as acute as what was seen between the allegedly Hamitic Tutsi and the non-Hamitic Hutu, the dichotomy between the so-called Semitic immigrants and the Kushitic natives has made inroads into the discourse of Ethiopian ethnic politics. In this respect, the Semiticists' interpretation of the Ethiopian past has added more heat to simmering ethnic tensions, the most formidable challenge to peace and to national unity.

As can be gathered from the preceding discussion, inherent in the Axumite paradigm is a European worldview that treats the Asian immigrants as movers and shakers, and the indigenous Kushitic, Omotic, and Nilotic-speaking Africans as passive.

No where is this Eurocentric bias against the Kushites more evident than in Edward Ullendorff's seminal work *The Ethiopians*. Having introduced his work as a study of the "historic Abyssinia and the cultural manifestations of its Semitized inhabitants," Ullendorff went on to describe the Kushitic Oromo, a major population group, in the most unfavorable terms: "The Gallas {Oromos} had little to contribute to the Semitized civilization of Ethiopia; they possessed no significant material or intellectual culture, and their social organization differed considerably from that of the population among whom they settled." Ullendorff explained Ethiopia's present-day predicament in terms of the Kushitic specter from which the country never recovered: "If there was one major factor that held Ethiopia backward and poor, it was the Oromo migration of the sixteenth century."⁴⁶

Deconstructionist and Secessionist Contentions

Ullendorff's dismissive and bigoted scholarship provoked new ideas that soon became the counter thesis to conventional wisdom. A deconstructionist interpretation of the Ethiopian past began in the 1960s, reaching full blossom in the 1970s. Its proponents were politically inclined leftist intellectuals, most of them veterans of the radical student movement. Traditional historiography might have provided a glorious, if romantic, narrative of the Solomonid era, but it did not explain the present reality of economic and political underdevelopment. For the younger and more ambitious group of Ethiopianists, class analysis replaced Semitic philology as the more appropriate historical cannon as can be drawn from the works by John Markakis, Addis Hiwet, Donald Donham, and Bahru Zewde.⁴⁷

Deconstructionists saw Ethiopia's imperial dynasty and its landed nobility as representing a parasitic and outdated feudal mode of production. Traditional institutions such as the monarchy and the clergy, once beheld as a sign of a more complex and advanced society, now symbolized oppression and backwardness, and Ethiopia, the museum of ethnicity, now became Ethiopia the prison of nationalities.

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From the outset, the deconstructionist genre embodied inconsistencies and self-contradictions. The secessionist perspective was, for example, an offshoot of the deconstructionist school that found itself at loggerheads with the prounity or “Ethiopia first” Marxist radicals. While the latter explained Ethiopia’s power dynamics from class perspective and sought to forge a new but no less centralized government under the guidance of socialism, the former placed the “nationality question” at the center of its agenda, insisting on the exigency of self-determination. Whereas mainstream deconstructionists found much to be admired in the technological and political achievements of the prefeudal Axumite past, secessionists denied the existence of historic Ethiopia altogether. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), for example, saw Ethiopia as one-hundred-year-old colonial craft. Its literature, as exemplified by Sisai Yibssa’s *Invention of Ethiopia* and Asafa Jalata’s *Oromo Nationalism*, traced the emergence of the Ethiopian state to the late-nineteenth-century, the period in which Menilek, a powerful Shoan prince, aided by European firearms conquered and annexed most of the present-day south.⁴⁸

Like their Oromo counterparts, Eritrean nationalists rejected the traditional Ethiopian historiography and, with it, the “three-thousand-year” thesis. The so-called historic Abyssinia, they argued, was a loose amalgam of independent chiefdoms without a constant power center or fixed boundaries. The Eritrean highlands might have been at times annexed by their southern neighbors, but for the most part the region remained either independent or under the control of foreign powers such as the Ottoman Turks, the Egyptians, more recently the Italians and the British. Eritrea, in other words, had never been an integral part of the Ethiopian state and Ethiopia’s irredentist claim had no legitimate historical basis.⁴⁹

Oromo and Eritrean nationalist historiographies have been smartly crafted to fit the mold of liberation theology, whose call for ethnic self-determination may at first seem fair and reasonable. It has been easy, moreover, for Oromo scholars to claim the higher moral ground as their studies have historicized, in theory at least, the cultural areas that the Semiticists had once dubbed ahistorical. This is only one side of the story however. Ethnology and cultural anthropology, relatively recent phenomena in Ethiopia, are often conducted by surrogate intellectuals whose anti-Ethiopian biases are dictated by their membership in ethnic liberation fronts. Not surprisingly, a considerable portion of the ethnographic studies on Ethiopia since the late eighties has been polemic and agenda-laden. Paul Baxter’s *Being and Becoming an Oromo* and Jordan Gebremedhin’s *Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea* are two fine examples of the fuzzy line between ethnography and ethnic propaganda.⁵⁰

In recent years, in fact, scholarship on Ethiopia has become so ethnicized that Eritrean and Oromo nationalists have boycotted Ethiopian studies

conferences, opting to form their own academic associations. Similarly, the North America-based Oromo and Eritrean studies associations, which are often composed of partisan intellectuals and Western sympathizers, have consistently excluded mainstream Ethiopianists from their annual conferences, therefore depriving themselves of the type of intellectual dialogue vital to the health and growth of any respectable academic discipline. The result has polarized Ethiopian studies along ethnic and, to a small degree, ideological lines, hence the failure of Ethiopian historiography toward forming a coherent understanding of the country's past.

The Pan-Ethiopianist Response

For mainstream Ethiopianists, OLF's secessionist discourse represents a regression to primordialism, while the Eritreans' go-it-alone attitude indicates a dangerous sense of self-delusion. Ethiopian identity, most Ethiopianists argue, is a concrete reality, notwithstanding the various contentions on the processes of the Ethiopian state formation. They reckon, on the other hand that rejection of Ethiopian identity has not been a mere abstract expression on the part of the disaffected. Eritrea has gained independence after thirty years of bloody war, and the OLF is still at large as a guerilla insurgency.

Uncertainty about their country's future in light of the ongoing ethnic strife has created among Ethiopians an introspective tradition, a soul-searching process into their country's past. Popular Ethiopian magazines are replete with articles about the meaning of *Ityopiawinet* or Ethiopian citizenship. "Ethiopia is greater than the sum of its parts," goes a common pan-Ethiopian saying. Advocates of a greater Ethiopia see Ethiopian identity as more than a mere geographical expression. Through intermarriage, trade, and cultural exchange, Ethiopians have been fused into an indivisible whole regardless of ethnicity and religious persuasion. *Ityopiawinet* is not an intangible construct; it is an incontrovertible sociocultural fact, in whose positive embrace lies the key to national reconciliation and lasting peace.

To lend historical credence to this emergent pan-Ethiopian spirit, younger scholars such as Teshale Tibebu and Ayele Bekerie have taken to task the Semiticist savants and their deconstructionist contenders.

In his introductory chapter to *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, as well as in an article in the *Journal of Black Studies*, Teshale denounces both the "Orientalist-Semiticist" and the secessionist paradigms. Of the latter, he writes: "The so-called 'Black colonialism' or 'participation in the scramble for Africa' ascribed to Ethiopia is based on an amazing ignorance of or deliberate indifference to the history of state formation in nineteenth-century Africa." According to Teshale, Menilek's imperial march to southern Ethiopia, the scholarly basis of the Oromo anti-Ethiopian

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discourse, was characteristic of an ongoing state formation process in Africa, itself a reaction to the growing European encroachment in the continent. Like the upcoming kingdoms of Buganda and Zulu, or the Fulani empire of Sokoto, Menilek's southward expansion was part of a larger African scene. "If, indeed, what makes Menilek a Black colonialist is the fact that he more than doubled the territory and population under his rule, then, obviously, Shaka should be 50 times more colonialist than Menilek because he expanded the territory and people subject to his rule by a factor of more than 100."⁵¹

When Europe was in total darkness about Africa and Asia, the Orientalists played an intermediary role as producers of knowledge about the East, at least from a Western vantage point. As the world has grown smaller through the advent of the jet engine and instant electronic communication, the Orientalists have long outlived their usefulness as purveyors of knowledge. This in mind, Teshale calls for a fresh and more inclusive continental paradigm. "The "Hamites," condemned by Western Africanists to carry the burden of civilization into Africa, are long dead. . . . It is time that Ethiopianist scholarship, as a hangover from Orientalism, is given a decent burial."⁵²

Ayele Bekerie's *Ethiopic, An African Writing System* is a direct response to Teshale's call, even if some of its speculation verges on the polemical. Expounding on J. A. Drewes' original argument that Axum constituted an autochthonous African civilization, Ayele refutes the conventional wisdom that explains the advent of the Ge'ez script as a borrowed and modified innovation. Ayele establishes common characteristics among the known African writing systems as represented by Ethiopic, Egyptian, and Meroetic. According to Ayele, the Ethiopian classical writing system known as Ethiopic or Ge'ez is one of Africa's major contributions to world cultures. Ethiopic not only represents Africa's creative literary genius, but encapsulated in it are African systems of knowledge and philosophy.⁵³

Ayele goes even further than Teshale in his repudiation of the externalists. He rejects the Semitic thesis on the ground that the South Arabians lacked the type of logistics and technology permissive of a large scale colonial venture. It had been claimed that the Asian influx took place across the isthmus of the Bab-el Mandeb, the gate of tears, the narrowest point between the two continents south of the Suez. The trek from the isthmus to the northern Ethiopian plateau covers hundreds of miles through one of the hottest and driest climates anywhere. This in mind, Ayele concludes with a set of simple but logical questions to which the Semiticists have yet to answer. What did Axum have that similar highland areas in Ethiopia or even in Arabia itself did not have? Why did the Sabeans, notorious for their sedentary agricultural lifestyle, venture across so inhospitable a terrain knowing fully well that many of them would not survive the ordeal?⁵⁴

Literary Portraits of Ethiopians

The Eurocentered Semiticist school of Ethiopian historiography argues that Axumite civilization owed its inspiration to immigrant influences from across the Red Sea, people who brought with them a high culture, a written language, the skill of architecture, and the plough. The African-centered paradigm, on the other hand, treats Ethiopia both as the cradle of humanity and as Africa's past civilization par excellence. The Eurocentric perspective emphasizes Ethiopians' racial affinity with the Middle East and portrays their country as a Semitic outpost, in but not of Africa. The Afrocentric literature, by contrast, regards Ethiopians as one of Africa's ancient stocks of people and places their past achievements at the center of African history.

While Western scholars often stereotype Ethiopians as xenophobes who look down upon whites and blacks alike, Afrocentric writers identify with Ethiopia as an exemplar of race pride and liberty. A brief sampling of some of the writings on Ethiopia might be instructive of these contrasting bipolar perceptions.

In 1906, a white American diplomat, Robert Skinner, stated that the Ethiopians saw themselves as Caucasians and scoffed at any type of association with blacks, a view that was reiterated by another white American writer half a century later. In a widely acclaimed travel book, *Inside Africa*, John Gunther remarked: "Some of its people are black like Vulcan, and some have Negroid blood, but Ethiopians most distinctly do not think of themselves as Negro or Negroid." In Ethiopia, unlike in the rest of the colonial world, Gunther observed it was customary for Western expatriates to work under local officials or ministers, a fact that supposedly contributed to the latter's regard of themselves as a superior race.⁵⁵

Such reductionist views have their roots in the colonial era when all of Africa, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, was under direct European occupation. As an independent black nation, Ethiopia was one place in Africa where the colonial color bar did not exist. The absence of "whites only" hotels and other social amenities was interpreted as a direct affront to European social sensibility. Those who refused to submit to colonial racial norms became uppity and arrogant, thus the mythology of Abyssinian snobbery.

It may be noted here that such a straw-man social construction is not particularly unique to Ethiopia. Just like detractors of pan-Ethiopianism, apologists of American slavery are quick to mention the fact that thousands of African Americans had held other blacks in bondage and that skin color was as much an issue among blacks as it was between blacks and whites. What these vindicationists deliberately fail to discuss however is that, even if some fair-skinned mulattoes passed for whites or looked down on other blacks, most African Americans, regardless of

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variations in skin color, intermarried and lived together. Moreover, the literature on intra-black racism confuses class with race, for the so-called high yellow or light-skinned blacks, including those who owned slaves, were often the sons and daughters of white planters from whom they inherited class and racial pretensions. In any case, the literature on intra-racial racism and black slavery, like the myth of Amhara chauvinism, has been deliberately exaggerated and distorted so as to minimize the extent of European racial atrocities.

Whereas black racism remains a mostly ultra right-wing discourse in America, in Ethiopia it provides the sugarcoating with which the ideology of the so-called liberation fronts is wrapped and presented to the ethnic masses. In the post-1974 era, Oromo and Eritrean ideologues would shrewdly capitalize on purported Abyssinian snobbery to lend legitimacy to their secessionist aspirations. The Amhara, the main ethnic group associated with historic Abyssinia, were not only singled out as representing a distinct colonial class, but were fitted with a tailor-made history that paralleled the history of European colonizers, hence the black apartheid image. Sorenson, a Canadian, whose interest in liberation struggles led him to the Horn, where he spent sometime with secessionist doctrinaires, is particularly credited for popularizing Ethiopia's colonial image. "In Ethiopia, the Amhara ruling elite some time have classified themselves as white but always as superior to the darker-skinned people of the south," he argued. "Just as Europeans felt themselves preordained to 'bring civilization to savages', so did the Amhara feel themselves possessed with a 'civilizing mission' as they expanded their empire into areas occupied by other groups such as the Oromo."⁵⁶

The fallacy and contradictions inherent in the portrayal of Ethiopia as a "colonial" or "dependent colonial" state have been documented by Messay Kebede and do not warrant repeating.⁵⁷ In response to Sorenson's thesis, it suffices to say that the Oromo are not only physically inseparable from the Amhara, but have been part of historic Abyssinia since the sixteenth century. For a good portion of the eighteenth century, in fact, Oromos dominated the royal court in Gondar, Oromifa having temporarily supplanted Amharic as the palace language. Even if one were to accept the convoluted logic of Amhara colonialism and apply its argument to other groups, Oromos would equally qualify as colonialists, for they too have imposed their language and culture on the southern peoples in the course of their expansion. Unfortunately, such intellectual fair play is of little interest to Sorenson and company, for it undermines the myth of Oromo victimhood, the premise of the OLF secessionist discourse.

The theme of "black colonialism" is particularly popular among two groups. First are the colonial apologists who try to minimize the moral turpitude of European colonialism by directing attention to supposed intra-racial colonial practices, namely the Amhara over the Oromo, or of

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the Tutsi over the Hutu, or of the Nguni-speaking Bantu over the Khoisans. Second are Western ethnographers, who, after studying and living with a particular ethnic group, start to see the neighboring peoples through the lenses of their foster society. They not only pick up subconsciously their host society's biases and stereotypes against adjacent groups, but as ethnic primordialists they become staunch advocates and defenders of ethnonationalism. Rather than engage in transcultural themes of greater national import, they enflame ethnic tensions by injecting the polemics of race and racism into local histories. Their incendiary literature questions the legitimacy of the polyglot state in Africa and in so doing makes Balkanization an ever more imminent threat.

The "black apartheid" image has not gone unchallenged however. Africa-oriented scholarship has argued that Ethiopia, because of its historic resistance to European rule, has received hostile attention, often maligned as racist and xenophobe. Contrary to Sorenson's and Gunther's theses of Ethiopian racial antipathy, African American visitors are often impressed by the warmth and depth of Ethiopian hospitality. "The hospitality and respect the people of Ethiopia showed me will be for ever etched in my mind," the Jamaican artist and photographer Neville Garrick wrote; "Welcome to my Ethiopia: a world of welcoming people, smiling children, and a wealth of legendary history."⁵⁸

In 1998, while on a whirlwind Africa-wide tour, Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, crossed paths with Henry Louis Gates, then working on a PBS documentary series on Africa, at the Addis Ababa Hilton. In Scriptural Ethiopia, "we found Africa, we found ourselves," was Farrakhan's response to Gates when asked about his impression of the ancient country.⁵⁹

Unlike Garrick or Farrakhan, Gates did not espouse the politics of black nationalism. Yet in his companion book to the PBS documentary series, he echoed an even louder pro-Ethiopian sentiment as he remarked: "Ethiopia has always represented something special, an almost mythically pristine site of blackness untrammelled by white racism or colonialism." Gates grew up in West Virginia in the 1950s when the word Ethiopia meant much more than a name. As a young boy, he memorized all the references to Ethiopia in the Bible, reflected on them, and pondered about their significance.⁶⁰

While traveling through the continent four decades later, filming for the aforesaid television program, Gates would feel flattered every time he passed for an African: "There are few emotions more sublime and exhilarating for an African American than to be mistaken for an indigenous African. . . . Nowhere in the twelve African countries that I visited was I more consistently mistaken for an African than in the ancient country of Ethiopia, the second most populous in Africa."⁶¹

The Du Boisian Thesis

The African-centered interpretation of Ethiopian history is for the most part attributable to African American scholarship. W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) pioneered this tradition. By 1903 the thirty-five-year-old Du Bois, Harvard's first black Ph.D., had already gained wide recognition with the publication of his classic, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Twelve years later, the New Englander contributed a monograph on African history, *The Negro*, in which he took to task the Hegelian worldview that Africa had no history worth examining. A subtle theme in *The Negro* is the concept of Afrocentrism, although coinage of that term was still decades away. Du Bois' contribution to the African-centered discourse lay in his argument that Africans, in their own right, possessed a past no less impressive than the histories of other races.

In *The Negro*, the Nile basin is portrayed as one of the earliest centers of state formation encompassing a vast geographical area, from lower Egypt in the north to Ethiopia in the east and to the great lakes in the south. Du Bois traced the Ethiopian connection with Egypt to the pre-pharaonic period. "Pre-dynastic Egypt was settled by Negroes from Ethiopia," he contended. "They were of varied type: the broad nose, wooly-haired type, to which the word 'Negro' is sometimes confined; the black curly-haired, sharper feature type, which must be considered an equally Negroid variation."⁶²

In his 1938 *Black Folk Then and Now*, Du Bois expressed even less patience with conventional historiography. "By general consent, modern historians have cut the history of the Nile valley entirely away from the history of Africa," he lamented, "and most of them deny any connection between the two." He further noted that "Egypt was by blood and by cultural development a part of the history of Africa, and Negro Africa must be explained certainly in part by the history and development of Egypt." For Du Bois Egypt was only the tip of the iceberg. "In Ethiopia and in what is known as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," he observed, "we have preeminently a land of the black race from pre-historic times; and yet today by a narrow and indefensible definition, the connection even of Ethiopia with Negro history is denied."⁶³

Du Bois' works situated northeast African history within the broader scope of black historiography for the first time. His thesis influenced a coterie of writers, among them Drusilla Dunjee Houston, a self-trained African American female historian; and Professor William Leo Hansberry, founder of the Ethiopian Research Council, whose writings on Ethiopia were compiled and published posthumously.⁶⁴

A colleague of Hansberry at Howard University was Carter G. Woodson, the founder of the *Journal of Negro History*. In 1936 Woodson published *African Background*, reaffirming the Du Boisian Afrocentric

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thesis. Africans had independently developed the art of metallurgy and pottery, invented writing systems, domesticated animals, and practiced sedentary cultivation. Nevertheless, European writers had insisted that such innovations were borrowed, an affront to which Woodson countered: "They have no more proof that what the Africans at that time knew was borrowed from foreigners than that the latter have borrowed such ideas from the blacks of the interior."⁶⁵

Du Bois had acknowledged the suffusion of Asian blood and culture into Africa through commerce and the consequent human interaction. Such racial mixing, in his view, was not peculiar to Africa's shores alone, for "Negro blood" was also visibly evident in Arabia.⁶⁶ Similarly, Woodson described the entire Red Sea region as a cultural "melting pot," in which Asians and Africans found a symbiotic give-and-take. "Infiltration rather than migration" dictated the means by which foreign elements trickled back and forth, he argued, and such exchanges were too insignificant to have altered the homegrown characteristics of the Axumite civilization.⁶⁷

Willis Huggins and John J. Jackson embraced a more critical appraisal of the Ethiopian past than the aforesaid writers. In their 1937 collaborative work, *Introduction to African Civilizations*, the two saw an important distinction between ancient and modern Ethiopian racial identities. From Piankhi in the seventh-century B.C.E. to Menilek II in the nineteenth century, Ethiopians regarded themselves as part of black Africa; but after Menilek's death in 1913, they accepted the pseudoscientific classification of their countrymen as Caucasoid, alienating themselves from the African world at large. Far from remaining alert and battle-ready after their Adwan heyday, the Ethiopians relaxed their guard and were easily defeated by their opponents forty years later. To their astonishment, moreover, the Ethiopians would discover that none of their European flatterers came to their rescue once the fascist onslaught began. In an ironic twist of fate, Huggins and Jackson reasoned, the second Italo-Ethiopian war symbolized Ethiopia's de facto readmission into the black race.⁶⁸

This early Africa-oriented literature on Ethiopia no doubt lacked the rigor of professional history. After all, none of these writers visited Ethiopia or had firsthand access to archival collections. Yet, their pro-African theories informed subsequent historiography in more ways than one. For example, Woodson's description of the Asian newcomers as infiltrators and not as colonists has been reemphasized by Stuart Munro-Hay among others. Munro-Hay, a leading student of Axum, does not deny the presence of Sabea settlements in northern Ethiopia and in fact dates their arrival there to eight hundred B.C.E. He does however refute the assumption of the newcomers as colonists. Because both northeast Africans and the South Arabians were more or less at a comparable level of development, the latter could not have superimposed themselves as overlords. They settled in Axum not as organized groups but in smaller

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units and even then were forced to live with the natives in “some sort of symbiosis” before being completely assimilated by them.⁶⁹

Similarly, the placing of Axum and Nubia on the same historical trajectory by Afrocentrists has sparked archaeological investigations into the material culture of both regions. According to Rodolfo Fatovich and Kathryn Bard, ancient Ethio-Sudanese ties are best attested by the funerary artifacts common to both cultures. These include excavated fragments of bronze and arrowheads in Axumite and Meroetic tombs, marks of royal burial in either instance. At Beta Giyorgis, an ancient burial site near the present-day town of Axum, Rodolfo and Bard have unearthed miniature stelae whose shapes correspond to similar prehistoric monoliths at Kassala. Based on such fragmented yet crucial pieces of evidence, Fatovich and Bard deemphasize the externalist thesis on Axum in favor of a continental explanation. Their conclusion states that “no evidence of long distance trade had been found in the proto-Aksumite assemblages at Beta Giyorgis, save for a sherd with a probable Nubian origin.”⁷⁰

One might add here that the physical evidence for Axum’s connection with Nubia and Egypt derives not only from archaeological findings but also from paleographic and architectural residues. In his late-eighteenth-century memoir, Bruce reported seeing some stelae in Axum with visible Egyptian influence. According to the British traveler, atop some obelisks lay faint replications of the sphinx, while others were engraved with the Dog Star, a representation of the Egyptian god Sirius.⁷¹ Bruce also cited a paleographic “inscription” on one of the stelae,⁷² which, according to Sergew, was a short prayer in praise of the Egyptian god Horus.⁷³ Though Bruce was aware of the association between Axum and Arabia from his reading of Ludolf’s work, the fact that the Ethiopian stone monuments bore certain Egyptian and Nubian motifs convinced him otherwise. In regards to Axum’s prehistory, he thus wrote: “for my part, I believe it to have been the metropolis of the trading people, or the Troglodyte Ethiopians, properly called Cushites.”⁷⁴

The Linguistic Basis of the Du Boisian Thesis

As mentioned earlier, the linguistic basis of the Semitist interpretation of Ethiopian history goes back several centuries. Interestingly enough, some of the compelling arguments against this externalist thesis are also based on linguistic textual analysis. Initial research had dated the oldest Sabeian inscriptions in Ethiopia to the fifth-century B.C.E., several centuries older than the earliest Ge’ez script. More Ge’ez texts, proved to be almost as old as the earliest Sabeian scripts, were discovered in the 1950s but did not alter the earlier assumption about Sabeian ancestry.

Taking advantage of the new findings, in 1956 A. J. Drewes published a short article in the *Ethiopia Observer* that challenged the prevalent assumption of the Sabeian tongue as the parent language.

Drewes' article,⁷⁵ which he later developed into a book,⁷⁶ acknowledged the presence of Arabian immigrants in Ethiopia, as evidenced by the characteristically Sabeian inscriptions they left behind. Since, however, the earliest Ge'ez inscription appeared within the same time frame as its Sabeian counterpart, Drewes concluded that there was no sufficient data to demonstrate the Arabian origin of Ge'ez by referring to the Sabeian scripts found on Ethiopian soil.⁷⁷

Drewes' overall thesis is shared by Ephraim Isaac, the Ethiopian-born classicist who claims Semiticist historiography suffers a serious methodological flaw because of its entrenchment in a Hegelian philosophical perspective. Ephraim particularly singles out E. Glaser and Conti-Rossini for their racially self-serving scholarship. From the apparent similarity between the letters *HBST*, found in some Sabeian texts, and the Arabic *al-habasha* (root for Abyssinia), Glaser and Conti-Rossini established as fact the Asian origin of Ethiopian civilization.⁷⁸

Ephraim disputes the notion of South Arabian influx to Ethiopia on four bases. First, the author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* made no inference to immigrants from Arabia during his visit to Adulis in the second century. Second, the letters *HBST*, found in Sabeian inscriptions in South Arabia, would not appear in the Ethiopian ones at least until the mid-fourth century. Third, in the various inscriptions discovered in Ethiopia and Arabia thus far, there is no reference to a large population movement in either direction.⁷⁹ Fourth, in recorded history, South Arabia has never dominated the African side of the sea; while the reverse is true of Axum, "in particular from about 335 to 370 and from about 525 to 575 of this era." Therefore, at a hypothetical level, Axumite cultural infiltration to South Arabia is as plausible as South Arabian cultural percolation to Axum, which means that without an objective and a scientifically based reappraisal of the debate, the Semiticist paradigm on Axum will remain little more than speculative conjecture.⁸⁰

Whereas Drewes and Ephraim question the Asiatic roots of Ethiopian civilization, Grover Hudson goes step further, arguing that the cradle of proto-Semitic lies in Ethiopia, not in the Fertile Crescent as originally believed. Inherent in the evolution of a proto-language is the gradual proliferation of dialects, branches spreading out in different directions following migration patterns. If the presence of several mutually intelligible languages or dialects in a given area hints to a point of origin or to a point of dispersal, as linguists argue, the largest concentration of Afro-Asiatic languages is found in the Gurage land of central Ethiopia, where a half dozen Semitic and Kushitic tongues are spoken in an area of no more than eight thousand square miles. In addition to several Kushitic dialects, Ethiopia harbors more Semitic languages than any country in the Middle East: Amharic, Tigregna, Tegra, Harrare, Ge'ez, and Gafat and Argoba, the last two long since extinct. Based on such facts, Hudson hypothesizes

present-day central Ethiopia to be the original point of dispersal for the Afro-Asiatic language cluster.⁸¹

The aforementioned works, along with the predominance of linguistic philology in their mode of analysis, are ephemeral in nature. Nevertheless, such sources prove that the externalist paradigm, although still the dominant school of thought, is finally beginning to crack. The contributions of Hudson, Drewes, Munro-Hay, Fatovich, and Ephraim have yet to receive the attention they deserve, but their overlapping arguments show that new and less conventional ideas have slowly begun to make positive inroads. Consciously or not, these scholars have upheld the Du Boisian banner even higher, enriching Du Bois' thesis with fresh insights and original data. While a continuum of the Afrocentric trajectory, their ideas signal a new trend, namely the need to ground Ethiopian studies in a larger continental framework, a framework to which the remaining chapters of this book also endeavor to contribute.

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Many writers have explored the concept of Ethiopianism from African, African American, and Caribbean perspectives. In a synthetic recapitulation of their writings, Ethiopianism is defined here as a set of ideas or beliefs based on the reading of selected scriptural texts and Western classics, from which was forged a sense of collective historical consciousness. Positive scriptural and Homeric presentations of Africa, in sharp contrast with the Euro-American perception of the continent as heathen and savage, provided the means for a celebratory self-identification. In literary texts such as the *King James Bible* and the Hellenic epics, allusions to Ethiopia (the generic name for sub-Saharan Africa) conjured up a powerful mythology that became the basis of nineteenth-century black liberation discourse.

Ethiopianist themes were generally expressed in three forms: millenarian, migratory, and emancipatory. Robert Alexander Young and David Walker, two black antislavery pamphleteers, shared a messianic vision in which they foresaw collective racial redemption through divine providence. In separate tracts, published simultaneously in 1829, both claimed the millennium was at hand. In the “Ethiopian Manifesto” and in the “Appeal,” Young and Walker respectively warned that, reminiscent of the Israelites’ final days in Egypt, divine justice would prevail on the side of the weak and the downtrodden, and that black slaves would rise up and overthrow their white masters.¹

Besides slave spirituals and sermons, in which similar eschatological sentiments were subtly expressed, Ethiopia-oriented millenarian ethos featured in a number of slave revolts. Nat Turner, the mastermind of the notorious slave uprising in South Hampton, Virginia, was a literate slave whose militant racial stance was reinforced by a close reading of the Old Testament.² Some of the Caribbean slave heroes, among them the Jamaican Sam Sharpe, a Baptist preacher who died on the gallows for his leadership role in the 1831 Christmas rebellion, also drew hope and inspiration from the Bible.³

Migration to Africa provided another possible course for the realization of the Ethiopianist dream. During the first half of the nineteenth

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century, tens of thousands of American and Caribbean blacks left for West Africa, supported by the American Colonization Society (ACS). While abolitionists criticized the ACS' resettlement project as a proslavery tact to keep America white, some of the returnees saw repatriation as a divine design to spread Christianity in Africa. Notwithstanding its patriotic fervor, the latter view emanated from entrenched Western paternalism. While on the one hand such missionary zeal indicated a genuine interest in saving African souls, it also revealed a naive understanding about the continent, suggesting that Ethiopianist thoughts were not totally free of Eurocentric prejudices.⁴

The Ethiopian nomenclature as emancipatory rhetoric was particularly common among abolitionist preachers, whose sermons often implored the prophetic verse of Psalm 68:31. Frederick Douglass, the most celebrated African American abolitionist, thus ended his autobiography with a special tribute to the aforesaid verse: "notwithstanding the blood-written history of Africa, and her children, from whom we have descended . . . 'Ethiopia shall yet reach forth her hand unto God.'"⁵

Not surprisingly, the first independent black churches in the Americas identified themselves with the nascent Ethiopian tradition, using names that had some relevance to Africa. By the early nineteenth century several independent churches had flourished in the continental mainland, the two best known being the African Methodist Episcopal of Philadelphia and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion of New York. Predating the American example by some decades was the Ethiopian Baptist Church in Jamaica, founded in 1783 by George Liele, a former slave preacher from Savannah, Georgia. By the second half of the nineteenth century, a separatist religious tradition known as the Ethiopian Church movement would also spring up in southern and western Africa, suggesting once again the popular embrace of Ethiopianism as an incipient expression of pan-African consciousness.⁶

Emperor Menilek's victory over Italy at Adwa in 1896 further elevated the concept of Ethiopianism. Menilek's Ethiopia, then commonly known as Abyssinia, provided two favorable factors to the Africa-centered liberation theology: indigenous Christianity and independent statehood. As one of the earliest centers of Christianity, Ethiopia facilitated a legitimate link to scriptural epics like the Solomon-Sheba saga. Identifying with Ethiopia's mythic past enabled religious-minded blacks to claim intimate kinship with the Old Testament and, through that, with the ancient world at large.⁷

The news of the Adwan victory came at a time when African and African American political fortunes were at their lowest. Since the Berlin Conference of 1884, which mandated the partitioning of Africa among European powers, few expected colonialism to be a short-term affair given the white man's overwhelming military superiority. In the United States,

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likewise, the 1890s marked the worst setback in the postbellum struggle for racial equality. In 1896, the same year the Adwan legend was born, the Supreme Court used the infamous *Plessy V. Ferguson* case to defend the ideology of white supremacy, or de jure segregation, in the name of “separate but equal” doctrine. Against these backdrops of colonialism and second class citizenship, Ethiopia’s military triumph over a European foe signified an imminent racial resurgence, and the far-off country became henceforth an icon of African independence and a source of racial self-reassurance. Adwan mythology rendered East Africa an important place in modern black thought, and Ethiopianism consequently became the direct harbinger of twentieth-century nationalist expressions, among them Garveyism, pan-Africanism, and Rastafarianism.⁸

New World Black Awareness of Ethiopia

Besides ensuring Ethiopia’s independence for decades to come, the Adwan victory catapulted onto the world stage the once obscure East African kingdom. In Europe, Italy’s defeat in Ethiopia revealed an indefensible flaw in Social Darwinism only to spark even more incoherent racial speculations, such as the portrait of Ethiopians as black Caucasians. Among Ethiopians, the year 1896 became a self-defining moment in their national history, marking their country’s emergence into modern statehood. Throughout Africa and beyond, Adwa heralded a new renaissance in race pride and militancy, and in so doing kept alive the anticolonial spirit in the hearts and minds of blacks for decades to come.

The ensuing fascination with Adwa opened a new chapter in intraracial ties, resulting in the visit to Ethiopia at the turn of the century by some extraordinary individuals. Benito Sylvain, a Paris-based Haitian intellectual and poet, first went to Ethiopia in 1897. During an audience with Menilek, the young Haitian aristocrat is said to have proposed establishing diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and his country but the emperor, known for his pragmatic foreign policy, received the idea coldly. According to Robert Skinner, a white American diplomat, Menilek’s supposed rejection of the panblack scheme was based on his belief that Ethiopians were not “Negroid.”⁹ Subsequent developments contradict Skinner’s account however. Not only did Sylvain leave Ethiopia decorated with the Order of the Cross of Solomon, but he would represent Ethiopia at the 1900 race conference in London, organized by the Trinidadian barrister Sylvester Williams and often referred to as the first pan-African congress.¹⁰

The Haitian poet returned to the highland nation in 1903, this time accompanied by a well-connected African American businessman, William Henry Ellis of New York. According to newspaper reports, the 1903 expedition to East Africa was commercially driven, with a secondary motive of establishing an African American colony there. On his return

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to the United States, Ellis tried to arouse American business interest in Ethiopia by painting a fantastic picture of the country as a land rich in minerals and forestry. He reportedly presented Andrew Carnegie with a business proposal from the Ethiopian government, a document to which the wealthy financier did not apparently reply.¹¹

Henry Morton Stanley, a naturalized U.S. citizen, made history in 1868 as the first American to reach Ethiopia while a journalist with the Napier expedition. There were other Americans who traversed through the African Horn in subsequent decades as mercenaries in the Egyptian military, then an expansionist power in the region. Unlike these early group of adventurers, Sylvain and Ellis arrived in Ethiopia not as escorts to a hostile army but with a peaceful mission, and can as such be credited for pioneering a fresh chapter in Ethiopian-American relations.

News of Sylvain's and Ellis' African exploits in effect paved the way for launching the first American diplomatic mission to Ethiopia headed by the aforementioned Skinner. In later years Skinner would take the credit for spearheading the American thrust to Ethiopia, while little was remembered of Sylvain and Ellis. The last mention of Ellis by a major newspaper was perhaps that of 7 December 1913 when, *The New York Times*, in its report of Menilek's recent death, gave the impression of Ellis as a close friend of the late king and a frequenter of his court.¹²

Arriving in East Africa in the early 1900s was Dr. Joseph Vitalien, popularly known to the Ethiopians as "Tikwur Hakim" or the black doctor. Originating from the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, Vitalien studied medicine in Paris where he presumably made Sylvain's close acquaintance. A multifarious character, the doctor served on the board of the Ethio-French railway company, tutored the young Tefari Makonnen and his cousin Imru Haile Selassie, and helped found the Ras Makonnen Hospital in Harrar and the Menilek II Hospital in Addis Ababa. Vitalien is remembered as Menilek's trusted court physician during the monarch's final ailing years. According to Richard Pankhurst, the West Indian "was highly esteemed by the emperor, who in 1907 contemplated appointing him minister of health in his first cabinet, but was dissuaded by the Great Powers, who regarded the doctor with jealousy."¹³

Included with these early pan-African pathfinders is a certain Daniel Robert Alexander. A native of Missouri and a one-time resident of Chicago, Alexander migrated to Ethiopia in 1908 with the hope of permanently settling there. Other than his involvement in missionary work, little is known about the circumstances behind Alexander's African sojourn. Until his return to the United States on the eve of the 1935 Italian invasion, he seems to have kept an on-and-off correspondence with pro-Ethiopian circles in Chicago and in New York, playing out the role of a pan-African liaison. Perhaps he was even the reason for the 1919 visit to

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Ethiopia by two black ministers: Bishop E. D. Smith and his secretary J. D. Barbour of Youngstown, Ohio.¹⁴

Other than the two clerics mentioned above, Addis Ababa saw no new black visitors until the beginning of the Great Depression. Paradoxically, however, it was in the 1910s and 1920s that the back-to-Africa vision gained its widest appeal. This revitalized version of Ethiopianism found its ideal spokesperson in the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, the leading proponent of black economic self-reliance and the back-to-Africa ideology.

In 1917 Garvey founded the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Harlem, then the largest race-based mass movement. A gifted orator, Garvey combined religious hyperbole with history and psychology to instill in his followers a strong sense of cultural and racial pride. He, for instance, challenged the conventional portrait of God with Caucasian features and insisted that every people had the right to worship God in its own likeness: "We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia. . . . we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia."¹⁵

Garvey, as some critics have rightly pointed out, had much better success in the rehabilitation of Africa's image than in the actual implementation of his repatriation scheme. The fact that few left for Africa despite the popular appeal of Garveyism can be explained, logistical issues aside, in changing socioeconomic and demographic patterns. During and after the First World War, a large number of southern blacks and West Indians moved to northern industrial centers in search of better paying jobs and a less repressive social atmosphere. Racism was as much a daily reality in the North as it was in the South; however, blacks north of the Mason-Dixon line not only enjoyed a higher standard of living, but fewer lynchings and a less menacing legal system made them feel more secure. In fact, cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York revived the image of the Promised Land in the minds of southern blacks, eclipsing any notion of migration to far-away lands. So, while postwar blacks found themselves in much better shape to channel financial support to self-help groups like the UNIA, they were at the same time pragmatic enough never to lose sight of the newly opened job opportunities at home, hence a direct connection between domestic socioeconomic conditions and Africa-bound migration.

Ethiopian Awareness of New World Blacks

If the years after 1896 saw a sharp surge in black interest in Ethiopia, the 1920s and 1930s likewise marked the beginning of Ethiopian awareness of New World blacks. Since the appointment of the twenty-four-year-old Ras Tafari as crown regent in 1916, the Ethiopian government had sought to broaden its international visibility. Illustrative of this outward-oriented policy was the 1919 visit to England, Belgium, France, and the United

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States by three government dignitaries: Blatien-Geta Heruy Wolde-Selassie, Dejazmach Nadew Abba-Wallo, and Kentiba Gebru Desta.

Although conceived as a goodwill mission to congratulate the Western Allies on their recent war victory, the timing of the trip shows the Ethiopians had possibly hoped to join the august international body in Versailles deliberating on the postwar fate of the world. The Versailles Peace Conference was preceded shortly by an anticolonial gathering in Paris to which the Ethiopians may have been invited. In any case, Tefari's officials arrived in Paris too late to join in the pan-African congress; nor did they show up at Versailles perhaps having been quietly informed by the French that their presence there would not be welcomed. However, Ethiopia was represented in the 1919 pan-African meeting by an unmentioned individual, presumably by Dr. Vitalien who, as it turned out, would also serve as Addis Ababa's de facto delegate in a similar race conference in London two years later.¹⁶

While European capitals were not new to Ethiopian diplomats, the arrival of the three Ethiopian officials in the United States in 1919 was the first of its kind. American diplomatic presence in the Horn went back to the early 1900s. But such was Ethiopia's irrelevance to American business and political interest that the State Department chose to close its legation in Addis Ababa in 1913. Until the decision by President Calvin Coolidge to reopen the legation in 1927, by which time Ethiopia had become a member of the League of Nations, the U.S. consulate in Aden, Yemen, oversaw American interest in northeast Africa.

Given Ethiopia's remoteness and obscurity, many American officials must have been surprised, if not baffled, by the arrival of the African goodwill mission. No visit could have been more untimely moreover, especially in light of the mission's concurrence with the Red Summer, a period of bloody race riots in the urban North. Understandably, the State Department had enough reason to be cautious. Addison Southard, the American vice-consul in Aden, advised Washington that efforts be taken to shield the Ethiopians from unnecessary racial embarrassment, for, although "dark-skinned" and "with the hair and some of the features of the negro . . . the Abyssinian is not a negro."¹⁷

Contemporary records reveal that the Ethiopians were not only aware of this kind of post-Adwa racial flattery, but some even welcomed it as complimentary. When explaining his country's attitude toward black Americans, Dejazmach Nadew, one of the three visitors, recognized that his countrymen saw themselves as part of the darker races but hastened to add, "we are treated like white men."¹⁸

It is not difficult to place Nadew's understanding of relative whiteness in a wider sociological context. Brown-skinned West Indians rejected being identified as black, a label they associated with dark-skinned or "full-blooded" Africans, while fair-skinned West Indians saw themselves

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as white altogether.¹⁹ What Nadew did not know was that in the United States, unlike in the West Indies or in Africa, whiteness was a binary sociopolitical construction dictated by the “one drop” rule, which meant anyone with less than a hundred percent Caucasian ancestry was classified as nonwhite. In any case, Nadew’s controversial statement can be dismissed as premature, for it was not long before he and his countrymen learned that they could not dine at the National Democratic Club in New York because they were black, a sobering encounter with the American color line.²⁰

Despite intemperate remarks by Nadew, and in light of the vast cultural gap between Ethiopians and African Americans, the 1919 pan-African encounter would be remembered decades later as a historic moment in intraracial mutual awareness. The African guests were met at the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel by a group of Harlemites led by the historian Dr. Willis Huggins and then taken to the Metropolitan Baptist Church, where they were introduced to the local black community. Heruy addressed the congregation through an interpreter, his message reading in part:

On the part of the Ethiopian Empire we desire to express the satisfaction we have felt on hearing of the wonderful progress the Africans have made in this country. It gives us great confidence in the Government of the United States to know that through the independence given you by America, you have increased in numbers and developed in education and prosperity.²¹

Even if Heruy’s flattering tribute to the U.S. government bemused some as naive, the trio left in their wake a favorable impression, thanks especially to Gebru’s extension of invitation to blacks to come and help in the development of his country.²²

After the dignitaries returned home, no doubt the reality of Jim Crow deeply etched in their memory, a letter was dispatched by Marcus Garvey to the Ethiopian government asking it to send representatives to the 1920 UNIA conference in New York. For reasons that remain unclear, Garvey’s message did not reach Ethiopia. The UNIA leader did not know of this however. Later, in the thirties, as Garvey’s attitude toward Ethiopia became tainted by events surrounding the war with Italy, he charged that Haile Selassie’s government was so snobbish as to have returned his letter of invitation unread.²³

Although the circumstances under which Garvey’s letter was returned unopened may not be fully known, it helps to note that Ethiopia’s rising racial importance in the 1920s was a source of concern for the Italian government. Following the Third International UNIA Congress in 1922, the Italian vice-consul in New York wrote to Rome, drawing attention to Ethiopia’s growing stature among black Harlemites: “The relationship of this movement {UNIA} with the Ethiopian empire is today purely sentimental. . . . Nonetheless, in the event that Abyssinia should be confronted by an imaginary or real

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danger, it is certain all the moral influence of this movement would side with Abyssinia against the usurpers."²⁴

In Rome, the Italian ministry of colonies inferred four points from the consular report:

A) The Ethiopic government participates in the movement; B) the word 'Ethiopia' is adopted as a synonym of the Homeland for the Black Man; C) Abyssinia invites the American Negroes to come and colonize her uncultivated land; D) there will be a declaration of solidarity with Abyssinia, should her territorial integrity and sovereignty be threatened.²⁵

Contrary to what was claimed in the above summary, copies of which were sent to colonial officials in Asmara and Mogadishu,²⁶ Ethiopia took no part in the UNIA conference. Otherwise, Italian intelligence was not only accurate but precisely foresaw the 1935-1941 racial uproar that Mussolini's African expansionism unleashed. From a historical perspective, the communique between New York and Rome reveals the extent of Italian colonial designs on Ethiopia prior to the consolidation of fascism, raising the possibility that Garvey's letter to Ethiopia may have been intercepted by Italian agents.

Ethiopian Overtures

The second encounter between Ethiopian officials and occidental blacks took place in 1927. That was the year that Dr. Charles Martin, popularly known as Azaj Hakim Warqneh Eshete, traveled to the United States to negotiate with a New York-based construction company, J.G. White Engineering, about the prospect of building a dam on Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile. Warqneh during the eight-week visit, not only finalized a deal with the construction company, he is also said to have met with President Coolidge in the effort to promote Ethiopian-American diplomatic ties.²⁷

Accounts of Warqneh's encounter with black America are controversial however. Willis Huggins, a Harlem activist and school teacher, wrote that Dr. Martin did not appear in public during his American mission, but all the same extended invitations to professional and skilled blacks to come and settle in Ethiopia.²⁸ According to the Guyanese T. R. Makonnen, the Ethiopian doctor refused to identify himself as black and rebuffed Howard University's invitation to lecture. He did encourage individuals with certain skills and education to move to Ethiopia, but the ones whose applications he accepted were fair-skinned blacks.²⁹

Makonnen's version was contradicted by Roi Ottley, a noted Harlem journalist. Ottley reported that Warqneh's visit was so popular that it resulted in the migration of "several hundred" Negroes to Ethiopia.³⁰ Given his close acquaintance with Dr. Martin, Melaku Bayen is perhaps

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the most reliable source on the controversy noted above. Melaku, then a student in Ohio, credited his countryman with having made serious but unsuccessful attempts to reach out to blacks. According to Melaku, Warqneh came to the United States with fifty-three job offers, all of which were turned down as they did not pay well enough by American standards.³¹ Many of the positions were later filled by Asian expatriates following a similar overture Warqneh made while in India.³²

Melaku's version of the story becomes all the more convincing as one considers that Warqneh's U.S. visit took place during a postwar economic boom, a period in which few blacks saw the need to leave their country for a life so uncertain in Africa. In a few years' time, however, there was a drastic turnaround in the overall attitude toward migration. In the thirties, unlike the economic boom of the preceding decade, there were fewer job opportunities for blacks and whites alike. The Great Depression made a job prospect anywhere in the world irresistible, even in so remote a country as Ethiopia.

Kentiba Gebru's 1930 trip to America, a follow-up to Warqneh's mission, was seen as timely and propitious by those seeking work opportunities abroad. The well-traveled Gebru epitomized the progressive segment of the Ethiopian elite. A Protestant by faith despite a Falasha upbringing, he was in a better position to espouse common cause with his black American coreligionists. Although his correspondence with a certain Edna Jackson of Buffalo, New York, was not couched in exactly those terms, the letter bore certain racial and biblical overtones: "I hope God will protect all my brethren over there until deliverance comes. I wish all who can come would come ere it be too late."³³

Building on earlier developments, Gebru's visit hyped up northeast Africa's image as the Promised land in some nationalistic circles. Undeterred by prohibitive costs and determined to rise above any impending adversity, several individuals left for the far-off nation for a fresh start. According to a report by Jerrold Robbins, a white American traveler, of the 150 or so U.S. citizens in Ethiopia in the early thirties two-thirds were black immigrants.³⁴

The last documented contact between an Ethiopian government official and New World Africans prior to the Second World War occurred in 1933. This time, Harlem's African guest of honor was none other than Haile Selassie's son-in-law, Ras Desta Damtew. The primary purpose of Desta's trip was to pay an official visit to the American government in exchange for the latter's deputation of H. Murray Jacoby to Addis Ababa to attend the 1930 imperial coronation. Like the other emissaries before him, Desta met with a group of Harlem notables led by Huggins in the aim of further strengthening Ethio-Atlantic racial ties. "During a two hour interview the Prince inquired of every phase of the life of black folk in the United States," remembered Huggins, generally known for his critical

view of Ethiopia. The encounter ended on an emotional note with the Ras having placed a golden ring on Huggins' finger as a constant reminder of the two peoples' mutual bond.³⁵

Ras Desta reiterated the settlement scheme that Gebru and Martin had promoted earlier. Because of Italy's ever-increasing war bravado, and because of disparaging reports of widespread poverty and disease by the earlier immigrants, few, if any, pioneers left for Ethiopia in the aftermath of the prince's visit. Still, Haile Selassie's son-in-law was remembered for the favorable impression he created. When the war with Italy broke out, Ras Desta, who died fighting for his country, became the best-known Ethiopian martyr in black America, immortalized by George Schuyler's 1936 fiction serial, *Ethiopian Stories*, in which the central character, an antifascist patriot, was named after him.³⁶

Thus, in just over three decades, Ethiopian relations with occidental blacks had taken a new turn. Ethiopianist themes had figured in the latter's consciousness even before the Adwa landmark, but it was in the subsequent years that the relationship metamorphosed from the abstract to the tangible. Likewise, the Ethiopian elite knew little about blacks in the Americas until Sylvain and Ellis arrived in Addis Ababa at the turn of the century. By the 1930s, however, Ethiopian attitudes had made some fundamental changes: from indifference to curiosity, and from curiosity to active exploration of mutual welfare, as can be seen in Warqneh's and Gebru's efforts to attract skilled black immigrants.

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3 the italo-ethiopian war and the rise of modern black nationalism

Few world events have aroused New World black interest in Africa as has the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935. The only experience analogous to the pan-African mobilization of the thirties in support of beleaguered Ethiopia is the worldwide condemnation of apartheid in the second half of the twentieth century. But while the antiapartheid protest spanned over several decades, the hands-off Abyssinia campaign concentrated on the mid-1930s, giving it a higher sense of urgency and momentum.

Although the black response to the Italo-Ethiopian crisis has been documented in various works, the literature has yet to address longterm racial ramifications of the war. This chapter argues that the Italo-Ethiopian hostility affected African Americans and West Indians differently. While the American Communist Party (CPUSA) tapped into the pro-Ethiopian platform to gain mass support among blacks, West Indian intellectuals exploited the prevailing anti-European sentiment to solidify the racially exclusive notion of black nationalism. Initially, American leftists' support for Ethiopia served to popularize their Party's multiracial image. But when events in China and Spain exposed the Marxists' skin-deep interest in the African Horn, the war drastically reversed the Communists' color-blind image, thus ending the love affair between the black rank and file and the CPUSA. To the West Indian and African intellectual elite, on the other hand, the war would provide an ideal opportunity for articulating black national consciousness, the philosophical linchpin of the subsequent anticolonial struggle.

The International Response

The Italo-Ethiopian war invoked various responses globally. Some of these responses were driven by national self-interest, some by racial and anticolonial convictions, others by a strong leftist and antifascist ideological fervor, and still others by a liberal humanitarian impulse.

Although Italy's unprovoked aggression against Ethiopia aroused popular indignation worldwide, national self-interest dictated that European governments remain acquiescent toward Mussolini. After

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Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the fascist government in Rome impressed the major European powers as a valuable ally against a remilitarized Germany. Even though both Italy and Germany maintained territorial ambitions over Austria, France and Britain excused Mussolini's arms buildup and nationalistic rhetoric as the lesser of the two evils. Consequently, the Anglo-French attitude toward Italy, during the latter's invasion of Ethiopia, was characterized more by a policy of placation than by a search for justice.¹

Once the war between Ethiopia and Italy broke out, France and England did indeed recognize the League of Nations' call for arms embargo on both the belligerent parties. They did so aware of the favorable impact such a stand would have on Italy. As an industrial nation with years of war preparation, Italy had built up most of the resources for modern hostility, while Ethiopia had not.² Moreover, the League's call for an arms embargo did little to impede normal economic activities between Italy and the rest of the Western world on whom Mussolini depended for raw materials and fuel. The League of Nations' policy of neutrality, as defined by its influential members, therefore sounded the last death knell to Ethiopian independence. The United States, although nonsignatory to the League of Nations, also chose to follow the example of its European allies despite the African American call for a more proactive role.³

Not every white government extended its support to Italy in the name of national self-interest, at least during the initial stage of the crisis. Following Hitler's rise to power, the relationship between Germany and Italy had grown more tense as both vied for dominance over Austria. Germany, therefore, pursued a pro-Ethiopian posture as part of its overall anti-Italian stratagem. Immediately after the December 1934 Walwal incident, Germany agreed to arm three Ethiopian infantry divisions with modern weaponry in the hope of subverting Italy's overseas expansion. According to this agreement, whose actual existence the Nazis eventually denied, Ethiopia was to receive an arms supply worth 33 million Reichmarks, most of it to be paid for gradually through the export of Ethiopian agricultural products. Hitler's subsequent change of heart prevented the arrangement from being put into full effect, but not before Ethiopia received a consignment of about ten thousand German rifles, millions of cartridges, medical supplies, machine guns, and cannons.⁴

Like the Third Reich, the South African government reacted unfavorably to Rome's belated colonial designs on East Africa. On the one hand, officials in Pretoria feared that Italy's colonial conquest, if indeed successful, would exacerbate domestic racial tensions. On the other hand, if Italy lost the war, as it had forty years earlier at Adwa, the Ethiopian victory might trigger a series of spontaneous anticolonial and antiwhite revolts. Mindful of a strong antifascist sentiment at home, the South African government opted for a less controversial position and even

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allowed zealots, whites and blacks alike, to organize themselves into pro-Ethiopian defense groups.⁵

The pro-Ethiopian policies of South Africa and Germany were exceptions however. Not only both governments supported Ethiopia for reasons of political expedience instead of moral conviction, but their support was temporary. As it became clear that Mussolini no longer posed a threat to Austria given his preoccupation with East Africa, Germany unilaterally terminated its commercial and military dealings with Ethiopia under the pretext of neutrality. Hitler, contrary to his rhetoric of nonpartisanship, supported the Italian cause from November 1935 on and was among the first to recognize Rome's suzerainty over Ethiopia.⁶

Likewise, Italy's brutal yet effective military operation relieved South African officials of their morbid fear. The defeat of Ethiopia, the country seen by many blacks as the last bastion of African independence, in fact helped uphold the doctrine of white supremacy which the newly elected Pretorian government, led by Prime Minister James Hertzog, explicitly espoused. Emboldened by the triumph of fascism in East Africa, in 1936 Hertzog's Nationalist Party facilitated the "Representation of Natives Act," virtually ending Cape province's liberal policy of African franchise.⁷

If duplicity and self-interest characterized the West's official reaction to the conquest of Ethiopia, at the street level the war sparked a genuine outpouring of public sympathy for the underdog nation. The extent of Italy's war atrocities, especially Mussolini's resort to poison gas and indiscriminate bombardment of civilian centers, aroused universal humanitarian rage, race or class differences notwithstanding. Religious leaders, trade unionists, liberals, and pacifists alike condemned the Italian invasion as unjust and barbaric. In Britain alone, more than a dozen organizations sprang up on the eve of the war to assist and to propagate the Ethiopian cause. The London-based "Abyssinia Society" filled its ranks with influential antiwar activists, outspoken Fabians, and government officials.⁸

The "Circle for the Liberation of Ethiopia," another prominent antiwar group in England, was led and founded by the renowned suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst. Through her weekly newspaper, *New Times and Ethiopia News*, Pankhurst would remain personally committed to the Ethiopian cause during and after the war. Miss Sylvia Pankhurst, whose son Richard Pankhurst is a renowned Ethiopianist, would spend the next twenty-five years-five of them in Addis Ababa-pamphleteering and agitating on behalf of Ethiopia and Africa at large.⁹

While liberals in Europe and North America sympathized with the Ethiopian plight for humanitarian reasons, subjugated peoples in Africa and Asia saw the war from an anticolonial perspective and regarded Ethiopia's conquest as a setback to their own struggle for self-determination. The Indian National Congress, itself engaged in a

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protracted struggle against British colonialism, sent money and medical supplies to the beleaguered nation.¹⁰ The Egyptian Red Crescent Society reportedly dispatched a medical team of doctors and nurses to the Ethiopian warfront to help treat the wounded. Ethiopia's victim status softened traditional Arab animosity to the country, with leading Middle Eastern intellectuals condemning the attack on Ethiopia as an attack on a "sister oriental" state.¹¹

From East Asia, the Chinese drew parallels between the Japanese attack on their country and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. In a message sent to the *Negro Worker*, a Moscow-sponsored black periodical, the Chinese Communist party recognized fraternal ties between the masses of China and those of Ethiopia. Despite vast physical distances, the message reminded, Ethiopia and China faced a common enemy, for the Chinese also had to fight against the Italian pilots and warplanes that Mussolini put at Japanese disposal. "This cements more firmly the bond between us and the Ethiopian people in the struggle against our common enemy: the imperialist robbers. Long live the independence of Ethiopian republic!"¹²

In an ironic twist of history, the Japanese also identified with Ethiopia at the outset of the African conflict. When ostracized by the great powers for its expansionist China policy, the ultranationalist government of Japan responded by withdrawing from the League of Nations and by engaging in a virulent anti-Western propaganda. For a while, Japan's anti-European sentiment found common cause with Ethiopia's struggle against white imperialism. Moreover, economic factors further legitimized Japan's antifascist position. For, having negotiated a treaty of friendship and commerce with Ethiopia in 1931, the Japanese saw Rome's ascendancy in East Africa as a direct intrusion on their sphere of influence.¹³

In Tokyo, Osaka, and other major Japanese cities, therefore, pro-Ethiopian defense societies multiplied in the wake of the Walwal crisis, while Japanese newspapers importuned active military intervention on the side of the nonwhite nation. The Japanese military had its hands full in China even if it wished to cave in to such visceral reactions; nevertheless, 138 boxes of medical supplies, enough bandages for thousands of soldiers, tents, and over a thousand swords (relics from the 1895 Sino-Japanese and the 1905 Russo-Japanese wars) were supposedly sent to Ethiopia as a symbolic gesture of Japanese goodwill.¹⁴

Like Berlin and Pretoria however, the Japanese eventually closed ranks with like-minded European fascists when so doing best suited their national interest. As practical calculations undermined the initial pro-Ethiopian euphoria, Tokyo supported Italy's campaign of colonial conquest in exchange for the latter's recognition of Manchukuo (hitherto the Chinese province of Manchuria) as a puppet state of imperial Japan. In September 1940 Japan would sign the tripartite pact with Germany and Italy, entering World War II on the side of the Axis powers.¹⁵

The Racial Response

In the West Indies, in Africa, and in black America, racial sentiment galvanized the antifascist protest even more than the colonial, economic, or humanitarian factor. Since Ethiopia's spectacular victory over Italy at Adwa forty years earlier, blacks had looked to the northeast African nation as a source of inspiration, a beacon of hope and freedom. To peoples of color, Mussolini's unchallenged march into Ethiopia represented a reversal in their collective struggle for freedom and equality, perceived by many as the "final victory of whites over blacks." Consequently, unlike any event before it, the Italo-Ethiopian war sparked nationalistic outbursts of racial solidarity among the black masses the world over.¹⁶

As William Scott and Joseph Harris have documented, the black American pro-Ethiopian agitation was primarily carried out by black newspapers like the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Amsterdam News*, the *Chicago Defender*, the Marxist *Daily Worker*, and the NAACP's *Crisis*. However indignant they felt, African Americans voiced their protest against the war through nonviolent means, mostly through church prayers, peaceful street rallies, and demonstrations. In large cities like New York, where blacks had a significant presence, the antiwar protest resulted in the formation of various ad hoc Ethiopian defense groups, among them the Medical Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, the Provisional League for the Defense of Ethiopia, and the Friends of Ethiopia. In 1936 these groups joined together to form an umbrella organization, the United Aid for Ethiopia (UAE), under whose auspices they lobbied in an effort to shift Washington's stand on the war from that of neutrality to one of pro-Ethiopian.¹⁷

Like the Afro-American media, West Indian newspapers played a leading role in drawing a sensational picture of the war and in mobilizing the local Ethiopian defense lobby. The Jamaican *Daily Gleaner*, for example, contrasted the image of a mad and monstrous Mussolini with that of a saintly Haile Selassie. Contrary to Mussolini's quixotic and bellicose dispositions, the *Gleaner* portrayed Haile Selassie as "sad-eyed" and "sad-hearted," pious and patriotic.¹⁸ A sister Caribbean paper, the *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, stated that "no world cause today can be more appealing than the struggle of this defenseless nation whose appeal has touched the conscience of the inhabitants of this cosmopolitan country."¹⁹

Perusal of the major Caribbean newspapers for the last quarter of 1935 indicates various fund-raising events, including benefit concerts on behalf of the pro-Ethiopian campaign. In certain cases, the newspapers themselves opened "Ethiopian fund" accounts and urged their readers to contribute. For instance, in conjunction with the multiethnic "Friends of Ethiopia Committee," headed by Captain Andrew Cipriani,²⁰ the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* launched the Ethiopia Assistance Fund, which raised over fifteen hundred Trinidadian dollars in less than two months. The *Gazette's*

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exemplar was replicated by many other circles, among them the Trinidad Labor Party and the Afro-West Indian League, whose combined sum of nearly four thousand Trinidadian dollars was cabled to the Ethiopian embassy in London on 15 March 1936.²¹

The much larger African American community, by contrast, had raised less than a thousand dollars by Christmas 1935, according to a statement by Willis Huggins, a Harlem school teacher. The Alabama-born Huggins admitted even that small sum was acquired mainly because of the effort of West Indian expatriates: "The West Indian Negro is beginning to feel more and more that he must work alone."²²

Whatever the basis for Huggins' claim, it definitely ignored the relative success of some of the multiracial groups. For example, the Medical Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia raised enough money to donate a fifty-bed hospital unit for Red Cross operations in Ethiopia; the American Aid for Ethiopia contributed \$2000 along with an ambulance truck and medical supplies; while the United Aid for Ethiopia came up with an additional \$2000 in medical supplies.²³

Huggins' understatement of the African American wartime effort was perhaps prompted by the great success of the Italian American fund-raising drive, said to have channeled as much as \$500,000 to Mussolini's war coffers. While it is true that first and second generation Italian Americans retained a more intimate attachment with the mother country, such contrasting outcomes also reveal a fundamental maxim about American society, namely the inherent economic gap between the black poor and the white working class. Having suffered from widespread unemployment and abject poverty at any given time, under the Great Depression even fewer blacks were in a position to support financially any political cause.²⁴

Poverty or unemployment alone does not explain the dismal performance of the black American fund-raising drive however. Although John Shaw, an import-export businessman, served as Ethiopia's honorary consul general in North America, the fund-raising campaign remained a haphazard operation, often carried out by individuals with dubious credentials and with few book-keeping skills. Huggins, who only months earlier had traveled to London to confer with Hakim Warqneh on the Ethiopian war situation, was one such activist rumored to have personally profited from the fund-raising drives.²⁵

Even more controversial than Huggins was a certain Tesfaye Zaphiro. The British-educated Zaphiro burst onto center stage of the pro-Ethiopian fanfare in America in December 1935. Born to an Ethiopian mother and an Anglicized Greek father, the newcomer affected Oxfordian English and airs of Ethiopian aristocracy, often going by the honorific title of Lij (Count) Tesfaye. Flanked by celebrities such as Adam Clayton Powell and Willis Huggins, the youthful and dashing Zaphiro made his debut on

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Christmas eve, addressing a crowd of three to four-thousand persons at the Abyssinian Baptist Church. He presented himself as the first secretary of the Ethiopian legation in London, a credential that endeared him to the numerous patriotic societies. Official inquiries into his status revealed that he bore no diplomatic credentials of any kind, but that did not exclude the possibility that he may have been handpicked by Warqneh, the Ethiopian plenipotentiary in London, and sent to America to work as Shaw's assistant. Whatever the nature of his relationship with Warqneh or Shaw, Tesfaye's presence in America inspired the various antiwar groups to come together and to form an umbrella organization, the United Aid for Ethiopia, with Lorenzo King as its president and Willis Huggins as vice president.²⁶

Supported by Shaw and the newly formed United Aid for Ethiopia, Zaphiro immediately set forth on a whirlwind tour of the country. Civic groups in major cities responded warmly to his visit, and in Chicago alone a sum of over \$350 was raised in his honor.²⁷

Later, Tesfaye claimed to have handed Shaw a check of \$5000 from his lecture tours. Shaw, however, not only denied such receipt, he accused Tesfaye of impropriety and embezzlement. Shaw, an English-born naturalized American, went so far as to question Zaphiro's entire mission and the authenticity of his credentials. Despite a good rapport with the African American community at large, Tesfaye found himself at odds with U.S. immigration, perhaps as a result of Shaw's behind-the-scene maneuver. In March 1936 the Ethiopian left for England, but not without being honored with a send-off dinner party by Harlem notables, among them Powell, King, and Arthur Schomburg. The Zaphiro-Shaw controversy dealt the pro-Ethiopian lobby its worst setback yet, attesting to the fact that what black America lacked, even more than resources, was a centralized and accountable leadership through which such aid could be channeled.²⁸

Attempts were finally made to coordinate the North American logistical support under the leadership of Melaku Bayen, Haile Selassie's personal emissary to black America. But Melaku would not arrive in the United States until fall 1936, by which time most of the fund-raising frenzy had plummeted.

In the final analysis, black contribution to the war effort was not as frivolous as it might initially seem. In his memoir, Haile Selassie paid special tribute to Afro-Americans for their "substantial support" to his government in exile. However loosely the word "support" is used in the text, the mere mention of that fact indicates Tefari's receipt of financial assistance.²⁹ He also acknowledged white sympathizers for their backing, but hastened to add that their aid, in any case, was too little to have alleviated his economic predicament.³⁰ The emperor had to auction his



July 1935: The Pan-African Reconstruction Association in Harlem recruits volunteers to fight in Ethiopia in the event of war with Italy

“personal effects” in order to make ends meet, and even then he had, as one of his confidants put it, to live in “genteel poverty.”³¹

Compared with the economic response, an even less successful aspect of the Afro-American reaction was the effort to launch a military expedition to Ethiopia. In the United States alone thousands of blacks were said to have volunteered their services, but their efforts bore no fruit for two reasons. First, American law prevented its citizens from joining a foreign army to fight against a country with which the U.S. government was at peace. Because Washington and Rome were still on cordial terms, the attempt to send an American legion to Africa was discouraged by the State Department. The second reason, which rendered the first point moot, was the simple fact of economics. The actual cost of transporting arms and troops to Ethiopia needed financial support far beyond the reach of the black community.³²

Notwithstanding such political and logistical hurdles, at least two black volunteers showed up in Addis Ababa in 1935. As Haile Selassie’s personal courier, John Robinson of Chicago flew risky errands between

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the Ethiopian capital and the warfronts, for which he earned the rank of captain. The other individual, also a pilot, was the controversial Trinidadian-born Hubert Julian, a flamboyant Harlemite who made his living by doing such dare-devil acts as parachuting from an airplane while playing the saxophone. Adding to Julian's popularity was the fact that he had survived unscathed two plane crashes a few years earlier: one while on a supposed transatlantic flight to West Africa that took him no farther than the shores of New York, the other while rehearsing an air-show for Haile Selassie's coronation celebration in Ethiopia.

Whereas Robinson exemplified the best of black America's commitment to the war, the search for personal glory drove Julian to East Africa. The Trinidadian's misadventure in Ethiopia represented a low point in Ethiopian and New World black interactions. Insubordination to seniors in the army and reports of complaints by several local creditors revealed Julian's true picture as an unscrupulous charlatan, leading to his disgraceful exit from the country.³³

As in the United States, a clause in British law forbade its subjects from enlisting in foreign armies. The law found its greatest opposition among West Indian war veterans who repeatedly demanded its rescission. According to the *Barbados Advocate*, about five hundred Guyanese ex-servicemen met in Georgetown on 7 October, four days after the outbreak of hostilities. They sent a petition to King George V requesting the suspension of the antiforeign enlistment clause so they could fight in Ethiopia. "Twenty years ago Negroes fought to save white civilization," claimed a petitioner. "Surely, they cannot now be refused permission to fight for what they regard as a symbol of their own civilization."³⁴

St. Lucians expressed similar pro-Ethiopian sentiments a few days later. In a public meeting the islanders called on the colonial office to allow their volunteers to fight in Ethiopia, to reverse the arms embargo against Addis Ababa, and to impose strict trade sanctions on Rome.³⁵

Jamaica, the major English-speaking Caribbean island, experienced one of the most intense antifascist protests. As early as the summer of 1935, there were talks about a "stalwart battalion" of Jamaicans going to Ethiopia to defend the country from Italy's impending invasion. On 9 October about four thousand men and women packed the UNIA headquarters in Kingston to express support for the distant nation. Various distinguished speakers, including Mr. Chas D. Johnson, president of the local UNIA branch, and Mr. L. F. C. Mantle, a popular columnist, spoke of the need to close ranks with their beleaguered kin in Africa. Mrs. Jestina Gunther, lady president, exhorted the women of Jamaica "to stand prepared for service to their mother country and their race." Mr. Gilbert Patterson, president of the Federation of Tradesmen, repeated the call to arms in order "to preserve the honor and sovereignty of the Ethiopian empire."³⁶

As Britain lent a deaf ear to the West Indian plea for action, anti-Italian feelings grew increasingly skittish, often turning indiscriminately anti-European. Mistaken for an Italian diplomatic compound, a Portuguese residence in Port-of-Spain was attacked and its national flag torn into shreds by an angry mob only a few days into the war.³⁷ In Georgetown, Guyana, following the closing of several schools because of rumors that Italian agents were distributing poisoned candy to school children, a white school inspector was similarly mistaken for an Italian and accosted by an over-agitated mob. Even if the growing nationalist sentiment did not immediately translate into collective action, sporadic harassment of white civilians created a volatile atmosphere that called for crowd control measures such as the imposition of curfews and the banning of public assemblies.³⁸

Antifascism and Religious Nationalism

Whereas racial sentiments aroused West Indian passion for Ethiopia, religious factors further antagonized their attitudes toward Italy. Indifferent to international opinion, the Catholic church under Pope Pius XI had taken a partisan position in the war by tacitly sanctioning Italy's "civilizing mission" to Africa. West Indians found the papacy's controversial role inexcusable. In Trinidad, Catholic-bashing became so popular that antipapal lyrics quickly made their way into local song compositions. In a 1938 Calypso record, "De Whole World in Confusion," a singer attributed the ever worsening international situation to the unholy alliance between the Vatican, the fascists and the Nazis. The artist identified the evil trinity (Pius XI, Mussolini, and Hitler) as the main culprits for the continued deterioration of international peace.³⁹

The February 1937 massacre of thousands of Ethiopians, in a drunken orgy of retaliation for the attempted assassination of Rodolfo Graziani, the Italian viceroy in Addis Ababa, inspired an anti-Catholic poem.⁴⁰ Appearing in the *Barbados Observer* of 12 July and again in the September 1937 *Negro Worker*, the poem deplored the fascist atrocities and denounced the Catholic church for its silence in the face of unprecedented evil:

One Roman Church, one Roman Pope!
One Roman hangman and one rope!
One Roman cloven-footed God!
One destiny: The Iron Rod!⁴¹

Similarly, beyond Trinidad and Barbados, so vehement was the Jamaican Catholic bashing that even nominal Catholics found themselves defending the papacy. Alexander Bustamante, then a prominent labor activist, was one such apologist. Shortly before the war began, Bustamante reminded critics of the pope that the Holy See no longer exercised strong political powers in Europe as it had centuries earlier. "I am positively certain that if the Pope could prevent Mussolini on his hell-bound determination

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to exterminate Ethiopians, he would, just as he would prevent Hitler from destroying a peaceful race as the Jews are. . . . In fairness to the Pope, I will say that the criticism against him is unfair, unjust, and unwarranted, for every Christian, I am sure, has a desire to prevent Mussolini and the Pope is a Christian."⁴²

The antiwhite and anti-Catholic manifestation was most apparent among the Rastafarians of Jamaica. Rastas not only perceived the pope as the anti-Christ, but also saw the war as a racial Armageddon. They believed the war would end white domination of the world and usher in a new millennium in which blacks would rule over whites.

In order to understand why Rastafarianism first took root in Jamaica, one has to take into account the long history of that nation's defiant past. The maroon wars of the 1700s, the Christmas slave uprising of 1831, and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 are but a few landmark examples of the islanders' heroic resistance against exploitation and second-class citizenship. Adding to this is Jamaica's rich history in religious revivalism, most of it associated with slavery and African influences. According to Berry Chevannes, many nineteenth-century Jamaican revivalist sects syncretized Western monotheism with such African religious practices as spirit possession, trance dancing, convulsions, as well as beliefs in sorcery and in the medicineman. This fusion gave birth to expressions of worship native to Jamaica, including Myalism, Pokumina, and Kumina.⁴³

Some of the revivalist groups produced charismatic leaders of messianic dimension. In 1895 Alexander Bedward, the thirty-six-year-old Native Baptist preacher, gained wide notoriety for his outspoken denunciation of the white establishment. Because of his incendiary rhetoric against the authorities, Bedward's fame as champion of the downtrodden spread far and wide. Allegedly imbued with prophetic and healing powers, during the next two decades Bedward became the most popular Baptist minister in Jamaica.⁴⁴

Bedward's own growing ambition resulted in his final undoing however. Having declared himself the son of God, Bedward proclaimed 13 December 1920 as the day of reckoning. Seated on a chair specially made for the occasion and surrounded by thousands of loyalists, on the said date the self-appointed Savior waited for his heavenly assent. The occasion, out of which nothing unusual transpired, left the Baptist sect in disarray, and Bedward himself died in obscurity in a mental hospital several years later. Nonetheless, the 1920 scandal did not end the peasantry's hunger for a messianic hero. In the 1930s many former Bedwardites would find refuge for their eschatological beliefs in the fledgling sect of Rastafari.⁴⁵

For West Indians in general, the 1910s and the early 1920s were decades of unprecedented population shifts, thanks to the economic boom in North America. A counterculture religious text introduced to Jamaica during this period, along with the mass flow of goods and ideas, was the

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"Holy Piby," a black supremacist version of the Bible. Appearing first in New York and New Jersey after World War I, the Holy Piby reached the English Caribbean sometime in 1925. The Jamaican version of the "Royal Parchment Scrolls of Black Supremacy" followed a year later, most of its ethos shaping the millennial basis of Rastafarianism.⁴⁶

The interwar years saw the revival of the back-to-Africa movement under the leadership of the legendary Marcus Garvey. Although, contrary to popular folklore, Garvey never made a prophecy about the coming of a race liberator in the form of an African monarch,⁴⁷ the UNIA leader did nevertheless hail the coronation of Haile Selassie as a historic moment. "Last Sunday, a great ceremony took place at Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia," Garvey wrote of the occasion. "From reports and expectations, the scene was one of great splendor, and will long be remembered by those who were present. Several of the leading nations of Europe sent representatives to the coronation, thereby paying their respects to a rising Negro nation that is destined to play a great part in the future history of the world."⁴⁸

In his tribute, Garvey described Haile Selassie as a race visionary. "Ras Tafari has traveled to Europe and America and is therefore no stranger to European hypocrisy and methods; he, therefore, must be regarded as a kind of a modern Emperor, and from what we understand and know of him, he intends to introduce modern methods and systems into his country." Garvey, a devout Catholic, concluded the piece on Haile Selassie by invoking the biblical verse with which Ethiopia had long been associated. "The Psalmist prophesied that Princes would come out of Egypt and Ethiopia would stretch forth her hands unto God. We have no doubt that the time is now come. Ethiopia is now really stretching forth her hands ... and it is for us of the Negro race to assist in every way to hold up the hand of Emperor Ras Tafari."⁴⁹

Garvey's account reflected widely held views except one factual error. Other than the trip to Europe in 1924, Tafari never visited the New World. Garvey's claim to the contrary, although a genuine confusion on his part, buttressed the image of the newly crowned king as an enlightened leader, conversant with modern politics and its racial double standards.

Out of the synthesis of Bedwardism, Garveyism, the Holy Piby, and Ethiopian symbolism thus rose the distinctive religion of Rastafarianism. Rasta doctrinaires interpreted the 1930 coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen as Emperor Haile Selassie, King of Kings, Elect of God, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah as the fulfillment of scriptural prophecy. To that effect, they found several verses in the Bible that corroborated with their perception of Haile Selassie (Power of Trinity) as the Messiah. Among them was Rev. 5:2-5, which the Jamaican ideologues claimed was a direct reference to Haile Selassie: "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seven seals?

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...Then one of the elders said unto me, Weep not, lo, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

When read in juxtaposition with the above passage, Psalm 87:4 provided further proof establishing Ethiopia as the Holy Land and Haile Selassie as the long-awaited redeemer, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there."

In the mid-thirties, believers found more scriptural heremeneutics that once again pointed in the direction of Africa. In tune with Rev.19:19, Rastafarians read the hostility between Ethiopia and Italy as the ultimate battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." The beast and the kings represented Mussolini and the League of Nations, while Haile Selassie was likened to the Messiah.⁵⁰

A contemporaneous picture of a defiant Haile Selassie, with one foot atop an undetonated Italian bomb, was viewed by the faithful as one more sign of the emperor's invincibility, a testament to his natural powers over man-made weaponry. Rastafarians therefore understood Italy's ejection from Ethiopia in 1941 not in terms of the reconfiguration of world politics in Ethiopia's favor but, rather, in terms of Rev. 19:20 that foretold the Messiah's imminent triumph over the beast and his followers, i.e., Mussolini and the League of Nations: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

An article that appeared in the *Jamaica Times* of 7 December 1935 added an equally compelling explanation to the millenarian dimension of the Ethiopian crisis. Attributed to one Frederico Philos, versions of the article were reprinted in European as well as Jamaican papers. Hoping to whip up a pro-Italian frenzy among whites, Philos described what he claimed was a well-organized, clandestine racial movement whose goal was to drive whites out of Africa. "Up from the depths of the jungle," the Italian agent stated, "and out of the hearts of modern cities, from all parts of the African continent and from countries where coloured people live, the blacks are flocking to the standard of an organisation which dwarfs all similar federations." The organization was known as "Nyabinghi," which, according to Philos, meant "death to whites."⁵¹

Established in the Belgian Congo in 1923 by a certain King Mocambo and his nephew, the movement was now headed by Haile Selassie. Among his followers, Philos went on, "Haile Selassie is regarded as a veritable Messiah, a saviour of the coloured people, the Emperor of the



Standing with one foot atop an unexploded Italian bomb, Haile Selassie reaffirms his country's mood of defiance against Italy

Negro Kingdom. Whenever one mentions the word 'Negus' the eyes of the blacks gleam with a mad fanaticism. They worship him as an idol."⁵²

In precolonial southern Uganda and northern Rwanda, Nyabinghi (or Nyabingi) was a fertility cult associated with social well-being and good harvest. Its rituals involved worshipping a female spirit or goddess, Nyabinghi: "she who Brings Bounty." With the advent of British and Belgian colonialism, the cult became a rallying point for a fierce anti-European resistance that lasted for nearly two decades.

While news of the Nyabinghi uprising might have reached the Caribbean long before the Italian invasion, the connection between the Central African cult and the northeast African king was an imaginative literary feat. The timing of the article led many Jamaicans to believe that there indeed existed a conspiratorial antiwhite organization under the command of Haile Selassie. As a result, some Rasta loyalists began to refer to themselves as Nyabinghi warriors, or just as Nyabinghi. From the

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traditional image of the sound of the drum as a signal for war, the term Nyabinghi came to be associated with a special type of drumbeat used for certain Rastafarian rituals known as “reasoning” or “chanting” sessions. Thus, despite the anti-Ethiopian platform that Philos’ piece was intended to promote, ironically his article left an indelible mark in the Rastafarian lexicography.

Ethiopian Identity Questioned

Just as Philos’ essay hoped to neutralize white support for Ethiopia by invoking the “specter of the black peril,”⁵³ another article tried to discourage the Afro-Jamaican antifascist enthusiasm by presenting a negative image of Ethiopia. In its 20 November issue, the Jamaican *Daily Gleaner* included a letter from a gentleman who signed his name as Azania, and who found the island’s “pro-Ethiopian sentiment” rather vexing. “I cannot help observing that the people of Jamaica are most illogical and short memoried,” the writer complained. “They seem unaware of the fact that slavery flourishes like the green bay tree in Abyssinia, and that it is highly unlikely that any of them will be welcomed there except in that capacity.”

The author recounted the unhappy experience of one Jamaican who had journeyed to Ethiopia a few years earlier only to be run out of the country, robbed and beaten. The cynic concluded by suggesting that the two million pound loan, lately requested by the Jamaican legislature from England, should be used to transport pro-Ethiopian politicians and civilians “to the land of their dreams.” The permanent removal of such misfits would relieve the island of its population pressure as well as solve its unemployment crisis.⁵⁴

Compared to the countless expressions of antifascist sentiments in the Jamaican papers, Azania’s and Philos’ anti-Ethiopian opinions were on the minority. Many Jamaicans, even those opposed to Rastafarianism, maintained a deep reverence for Ethiopia because of its place in the Bible, identifying its people as kith and kin. The island’s leading advocate of Ethiopianism was L. C. Mantle, a self-proclaimed authority on African history and a regular contributor to *Plain Talk*, a black-owned newspaper. In Mantle’s view, Ethiopia was the living symbol of Africa’s golden past and the origin of human civilization. “I am sick and tired to hear so much tomfoolery that the Ethiopians are not Negroes,” he wrote, responding to views like that of Azania’s. “Negro,” Mantle explained, is a term used to denigrate blacks, hence the reason why the Ethiopians reject it.⁵⁵

The raging debate over Abyssinian race loyalty provided the strongest ammunition to detractors and opportunists alike, thanks to the endless profascist propaganda that deliberately fed the controversy. In the United States, the question about the Ethiopians’ racial identity was tackled by, among others, the Harvard-trained Du Bois and the Jamaican-

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born journalist J. A. Rogers. "Look at the pictures of Abyssinians now widely current," Du Bois begged for common sense. "They are as Negroid as American Negroes. If there is a black race they belong to it." The New Englander agreed that the concept of race was a pseudoscientific construction, as there was no such a thing as a pure black or white or yellow race. "But in the rough and practical assignment of mankind to three divisions, the Ethiopians belong to the black race."⁵⁶

Rogers, who visited East Africa shortly before the war, explained that although Ethiopians regarded diaspora blacks as blood kin, they preferred to think of themselves "as a nation and not as a race." Even though they identified themselves as Africans, they refused to be called "Negro" as the term was long associated with slavery and second-class citizenship.⁵⁷ Believing in Ethiopia's potential as a "vast outlet" for African American technical and educational expertise, the Harlem-based writer recommended that Amharic be taught in black colleges, for, according to his personal observation, blacks were well received in Ethiopia provided they manifested no Western "airs of superiority."⁵⁸

Calypso and Protest

Whereas political rallies, newspaper editorials, and fund-raising drives appeared as dominant features in the North American black reaction to the war, in parts of the Caribbean songs and ballads further complemented the antifascist furor. This use of mass culture as an expression of popular protest was particularly common among the Calypsonians of Trinidad. The call to arms by black ex-servicemen at the onset of the fascist aggression became the basis for Houdini's provocative battle cry, "The Ethiopian War Drums," in which he sang:

Black men the bugle call
Come one, come all
The drums are beating and the bugle call
Come one, come all
Don't mind what Mussolini say
Let's march in battle array
And a gun in your hand to defend the Ethiopian
War declare.⁵⁹

Another Calypsonian bard composed "Mussolini Playing de Fool," in which he confidently hoped that the Ethiopians would put Mussolini in his place as they had his forefathers forty years earlier. This particular composition was reminiscent of the optimism shared among some blacks, especially the Rastafarians, regarding the outcome of the war. Similarly, it reflected the invincible image of Ethiopia that the 1896 Adwa victory had engraved in the minds of many.

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Mussolini is only playing de fool,
We know that Ethiopia will bring him cool;
It's the very country that gave him leaks,
It was in the year eighteen-ninety-six.
You know they altered them and they were so sore!
And look at how they're going back for more.
But this time what they'll have to do,
Is to hold Mussolini and alter him too.⁶⁰

Between 1936 and 1938, well-known Calypso artists came up with a number of pro-Ethiopian hits, among them Roaring Lion's "Advantage Mussolini," Ras Kasa's "Abyssinia Lament," Caresser's "Haile Selassie Held by Police," and Growling Tiger's "The Gold." Using gold as a symbol of Africa's untapped natural wealth, Growling Tiger provided a down-to-earth explanation of the war that even the least sophisticated member of society could understand:

The gold, the gold,
The gold, the gold,
The gold in Africa
Mussolini want from the Emperor.
Abyssinia appeal to the League for peace
Mussolini actions were like a beast
A villain, a thief, a highway robber
And a shameless dog for a dictator.
He crossed the border and wanted more
The Emperor had no intentions for war
That man I call a criminal
The man destroyed churches and hospitals.
He said expansion he really need
He have forty-five million heads to feed
Why he don't attack the Japanese
England, France, or hang on to Germany?⁶¹

According to Rohlehr, "The Gold" remained a popular hit for some time, so much so that it made life difficult for Trinidadians of Italian descent. Thus, in the pretelevision age, when even the radio was still a novelty, Calypso became a means for relaying the news of the Italo-Ethiopian war to the nonliterate masses. Such songs further promoted the Ethiopian side of the debate by reducing the complexity of the war to a racial question of right versus wrong, black versus white.

Political Consequences

The late 1930s was a period of major political and economic unrest for the entire Caribbean archipelago. The crisis is generally attributed to the decade's worldwide economic slump, which witnessed a drastic fall in the price of agricultural exports, living standards, and wages. Horace Campbell sees a nexus between the Caribbean unrest of the late thirties and the ongoing Italo-Ethiopian war: "The fact that the Ethiopian masses had taken to arms was deliberately used as a device to strengthen the resolve of blacks in the Caribbean to oppose colonialism." Furthermore, Campbell writes, "This resolve led to the violent confrontations which shook the Caribbean beginning in St. Vincent and Guyana in 1935, spreading like bush-fire to Trinidad and Antigua, and erupting in Jamaica in 1938."⁶²

As the two largest English-speaking Caribbean colonies, Trinidad and Jamaica were naturally where the labor unrest remained most critical. In the former, the antifascist campaign had prompted, as early as June 1935, formation of the Afro-West Indian League, a mostly middle-class organization led by luminaries such as Leonard Fitzgerald Walcott, a newspaper editor, and Hugo Mentor, also a journalist. Other antiwar groups that sprouted between May and October 1935 included the West Indian Welfare Youth League, the Friends for Ethiopia Committee, and the Trinidad Citizens' Committee. The Negro Welfare Social and Cultural Association, NWSA, was founded in spring 1934 by Marxist ideologues connected with the overseas-based George Padmore in response to the socioeconomic crisis of the Great Depression. While organizational discipline may have situated the NWSA in a better position to promote the antifascist platform, its esoteric politics rendered such leadership potential moot.⁶³

December 1935 saw the climax of the organizational response with the establishment of the Trinidad Citizens' League (TCL), a militant labor formation whose members included African as well as Asian activists. Notwithstanding cultural and religious differences between blacks and East Indians, the antifascist cause had facilitated a unifying political platform, bringing together the two major ethnic groups on the island. Adrian Rienzi, an East Indian lawyer, is credited for launching the TCL during a multiethnic pro-Ethiopian gathering at Princess Town. His call to Black and Indian workers alike to close ranks with the anti-imperial struggles in Africa and Asia gave impetus to the short-lived but historically significant Afro-Asian labor alliance.⁶⁴

By June 1936, even though the TCL had disbanded because of leadership discord, some of its core founders would go on to play a key role in the island's notorious labor revolt the following year. Trinidad's 1937 labor uprising, according to the island's governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher, was in part the making of the unresolved "Ethiopian question."⁶⁵ This claim is supported, over a half century later, by Kevin Yelvington

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who sees in Trinidad's antifascist mobilization a major milestone in the coalescing of racial and working class consciousness.⁶⁶

A central figure in the 1937 historic revolt was Tubal Uriah Butler, one of Rienzi's black associates and cofounder of the TCL.⁶⁷ The recent oil discovery at Fyzabad, near the town of San Fernando in the south, had led to the demolition of villages surrounding the oil fields, creating a mass of destitute squatters. While addressing protest rallies on several occasions, Butler invoked powerful parallels between the destruction of Fyzabad by the oil prospectors and the destruction of Ethiopia by fascist Italy. One such speech at a workers' meeting in Fyzabad on 22 June 1937 triggered a riot that claimed the lives of two policeman, an incident that precipitated a series of strikes and boycotts that left the island in a state of economic paralysis for months to come.⁶⁸

In Jamaica, the racial tension that had been simmering since the invasion of Ethiopia found an outlet during the 1938 labor unrest. The revolt pitted the island's predominantly black working class against the white and brown planter aristocracy. Supported by the urban middle class and labor rights activists, the workers demanded higher wages, better and more humane working conditions, and political liberalization. The boycotts and strikes, which led to the fatal shooting of several workers by the police, ended only after the planters agreed to raise farm wages and to improve living and working conditions.⁶⁹

The 1937-38 West Indian unrest influenced the implementation of a series of labor reforms that legalized trade unions and made the legislative bodies more representative. By 1945 there were about sixty-five Caribbean trade unions, many of them later turning into political parties. The Caribbean labor revolt of the late 1930s and the accompanying reforms rendered old-style colonial rule obsolete and ushered in a period of transition towards self-government and independence.⁷⁰

The African American Intelligentsia and the War

As discussed in the preceding section, Caribbean and American blacks reacted uniformly to the Italo-Ethiopian war at the grassroots level. The exact details of the response might have slightly varied from community to community, or from nation to nation, but in general the antifascist cause provided ordinary blacks a common political platform and an unprecedented sense of internationalism. Unlike the grassroots' mobilization, the intellectuals' reaction varied greatly, class and ideological orientations often the determinant factors. The "class versus racial" debate over the roots of the Italo-Ethiopian imbroglio revealed a consistent rift between West Indian and African American ideologues, and in so doing underscored a fundamental difference in their sociopolitical traditions.

Compared to the average person on the street, mainstream African American professionals, intellectuals, and artists responded to the

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Ethiopian call rather ambivalently. Although the black elite no doubt shared in the pro-Ethiopian sentiment, few of its influential voices went beyond the simple act of denouncing Italy's acts of aggression in the print media. Many of the action-oriented leftists, to the contrary, closed ranks with the urban multitude.⁷¹ "To channel the black masses' burgeoning anger into disciplined action that was antifascist rather than antiwhite and to solidify the Party's base among African Americans," Scott writes, "Harlem Communists sought to form a united front of colored organizations and individuals dedicated to the defense of black Ethiopia."⁷²

The conspicuous presence of the black left in the antifascist protest was not an impromptu phenomenon. By the early thirties communism had gained a strong foothold in the American political landscape, thanks to the unparalleled economic crisis of modern times. Even the historically conservative South was not immune to what was referred to as "Red infiltration." In Alabama, for instance, because of the relentless legal crusade on behalf of the Scottsboro defendants by the Communist-led International Labor Defense (ILD), many blacks joined the Communist party, whose popularity soon rivaled that of the NAACP.⁷³

Notwithstanding Russia's continuous sale of strategic war materials to Italy, the African American left made no attempt to sever ties with Moscow. Among those who enjoyed close ties with the Soviets during the war were Benjamin Davis, editor of the *Daily Worker*; Max Yergan, a peripatetic international agitator; James W. Ford, Harlem's full-time Party activist; the novelist Richard Wright; and the renowned singer and actor Paul Robeson.

Ford, who on more than one occasion ran for the White House as his Party's vice presidential candidate, articulated the overall sentiment of the black left in a series of publications. Identifying economic interest as the primary motive behind Italy's policy of expansionism in Africa, Ford called upon all progressive forces to oppose the war not for racial reasons but as part of the international struggle against imperialism. He reminded his readers of the thousands of Italian labor activists and Party members who became victims of Il Duce's domestic persecution. Since workers everywhere had denounced Mussolini's colonial grandeur, he argued, it was only practical that white and black toilers in America should forget about race differences and form a united front against fascism.⁷⁴

In September 1935, just before the outbreak of war, Ford led a team of African Americans to Geneva to meet with Ethiopia's ambassador to the League of Nations, Bedjironde Tekle Hawariat. During the meeting, Tekle Hawariat reminded his American guests that Ethiopia had no need for foreign fighters as the country had enough local volunteers. What Ethiopians wanted from their racial cousins abroad was, instead, material and financial support.⁷⁵

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The ambassador's explanation reinforced the Communists' view of what needed to be done. Ford insisted that the idea of sending thousands of black volunteers to Africa was diplomatically impractical, for the colonial powers would not permit sea passage for any such expedition. Rather, the Ethiopians needed more modern armaments, including machine guns and ammunition in order to defend themselves. "It would seem, therefore, that the more practical thing to do in this connection would be to send every penny we could raise to help the people of Ethiopia procure these things."⁷⁶

Even though Ford's proposal met little success, his group, the Harlem branch of the Communist party, was responsible for bringing together the various Ethiopian defense societies under the coalition of United Aid for Ethiopia. It was also credited with coordinating a series of interracial campaigns, including the 3 August 1935 antiwar demonstration, where more than twenty thousand white and black New Yorkers reportedly took part.⁷⁷

The Caribbean Left and the War

The Great Depression coincided with the radicalization of the European-based Caribbean intelligentsia. But unlike in the United States, where the black left remained subservient to Moscow throughout the war years, the Italo-Ethiopian hostility became a source of ideological retreat for the West Indian Marxists. For the Caribbean intelligentsia, in other words, the war marked a point of transition from class-driven political activism to race-oriented pan-African nationalism.⁷⁸

Most prominent among the Caribbean leftist thinkers of the 1930s was Malcolm Nurse, alias George Padmore. Born and brought up in Trinidad, Padmore became associated with the radical left while a student at Howard University in the 1920s. In 1929 the West Indian activist relocated to Moscow to work for the Communist International or the Comintern, and two years later he was appointed editor of the Hamburg-based Marxist periodical, the *Negro Worker*: organ of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW).⁷⁹

While the *Negro Worker* joined in the struggle for racial justice in Europe and America, it denounced race consciousness as a reactionary concept so designed by bourgeois thinkers as to antagonize the working class along color lines. In its November 1932 issue, Padmore cautioned against "so-called Negro leaders" who were trying to create the impression that all dark-skinned peoples, whether rich or poor, had the same political interest. He reminded his readers that "in all capitalist countries whether the population happens to be white as in Europe, yellow as in Japan and China, brown as in India, or black as in Liberia and Haiti, it is not color that counts but class."⁸⁰

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The Trinidadian Marxist insisted that “Lenin was not only the leader of Russian toilers, but was the greatest champion and fighter for the freedom of all other oppressed peoples, including the terribly exploited and oppressed Negroes in Africa, America, and the West Indies.”⁸¹ Entreating his readers, he added, “Let these 15 years of Soviet power be the greatest inspiration to us and our struggle for national freedom and social emancipation.”⁸²

The year 1933 was a tense period in Europe as it marked the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazism to power. The Soviets reacted quickly by temporarily disbanding the aforementioned ITUCNW, the Moscow-sponsored anticolonial organization, in order to improve relations with the West and thereby isolate the Slavphobic Nazi leadership. To protest Moscow’s sudden volte-face, Padmore resigned his position as editor of the *Negro Worker*, an action tantamount to outright treason according to Party standards, thus his expulsion from the Comintern.⁸³ Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Garan Kouyate of French West Africa, both protégés of Padmore, also withdrew from their positions as assistant editors, bringing the monthly publication to a standstill.⁸⁴ The *Negro Worker* later moved its editorial office from Hamburg to Copenhagen and then permanently to Paris, from where it continued its role as the mouthpiece of the newly reinstated ITUCNW.⁸⁵

Following the news that the Soviets were supplying Mussolini’s war machine with oil and other essential materials, in May 1935 Padmore wrote an article from London expressing his disillusionment with communism. The Italo-Ethiopian crisis “should serve to open the eyes of Negroes the world over that white nations, regardless of their political systems, have no scruples in joining hands and assigning parts of Africa to whichever one stands most in need of colonies.”⁸⁶

George Thomas Nathaniel Griffith, alias T. R. Makonnen, was another West Indian activist who, like Padmore, metamorphosed from a Marxist ideologue to a pan-African nationalist. Born in British Guyana at the beginning of the century, he moved to the United States in the late 1920s. While studying agriculture and animal husbandry at Cornell University in New York, he sampled the spectrum of American politics, communism making the strongest impression on him. As a Garveyite, he cultivated friendship with African students, Ethiopians included. He changed his last name from Griffith to Ras Makonnen, explaining in his memoir that his grandfather was an Ethiopian miner who migrated to British Guyana in the 1880s.⁸⁷

In 1935 Makonnen left New York for Europe to intern at a Danish agricultural cooperative. His experience with the Danish left convinced him, thanks to the crisis in Ethiopia, of the movement’s double standard when it came to the issue of race. Denmark was exporting mustard to Italian industries with full knowledge that it was going to be converted

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into mustard gas for use in Ethiopia, but the trade with fascism raised no eyebrows, not even among the radical elements. Makonnen soon discovered that the Scandinavian left was "in some difficulty over the attitude to intervention in the Italo-Ethiopian war." After publicly criticizing Denmark's trade links with fascist Italy, Makonnen was arrested and deported to England, where he luckily found an emergent pan-African circle, an offshoot of the pro-Ethiopian defense movement.⁸⁸

Not every Caribbean Marxist felt ideologically disillusioned by the Communists' duplicitous role. But even for those few diehard Caribbean leftists who remained steadfast to Party doctrine, the Italo-Ethiopian conflict was not without racial ramifications. The Trinidadian-born C.L.R. James (Padmore's childhood friend) had by the mid-thirties gained prominence within the British Trotskyists' circle. Naturally, the Stalin-Mussolini economic pact posed no ideological dilemma on the Trotskyists, and James did not have to apologize for the Soviet action nor denounce his Party affiliation. Nonetheless, contrary to his white colleagues who explained the war solely in economic terms, James interpreted the Italian aggression as both a racially and imperially driven phenomenon. In his opinion the war was perfect proof to all blacks of the "incredible savagery and duplicity of European imperialism in its quest for markets and raw materials."⁸⁹ On a deeper level, the war persuaded James about the practicality of race consciousness as a tool for organizing the black working class into a well-disciplined political force. He communicated this point as early as 1938 in his "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question," which called for the creation of an independent black political party no longer subject to white control.⁹⁰

If the war exercised a mellowing influence on the young West Indians and their class rhetoric, it had the opposite impact on Harold Moody and the League of Colored Peoples (LCP). Founded and chaired by Moody, a Jamaican medical practitioner married to an English woman, the London-based LCP had by its nonmilitant nature exerted a positive influence on the British public in the 1930s.⁹¹ The LCP provided social services and recreational outlets, making it a popular rendezvous for West Indian and African students. A friendly critic characterized the group's aspiration as "mild politics, or, if you like, harassing the goody-goody elements in Britain."⁹²

Because of Moody's compromising and passive position on racial matters, the young radicals initially dismissed the LCP as a sycophantic organization. The war provided Moody with an ideal opportunity to refute this image. In September 1935 the LCP passed strong antiwar and anticolonial resolutions, becoming henceforth an important pressure group in the pro-Ethiopian campaign.⁹³ Despite their ideological and tactical differences, from that point on Moody and the young nationalists would engage in parallel if not in joint activities to advance black interest.⁹⁴

Relations between the LCP and the pan-African militants would remain amicable throughout the war years, the latter being particularly grateful to Moody for letting them express their ideas in the LCP's journal, *Keys*.⁹⁵

Garvey and the Black Right Wing

Not every Caribbean activist followed the examples of James, Makonnen, Padmore, or Moody. Several months before the outbreak of hostilities, Garvey had left Jamaica for England in order to start a new political life. He was now a minor figure, his attempts to revive the heyday of the UNIA having failed. Despite his ebbing fortune, Garvey continued to publish a monthly magazine, *Black Man*, in which the Italo-Ethiopian crisis featured regularly.⁹⁶ In one issue he bitterly denounced Italian bombardment of Ethiopian civilian centers with poison gas as the most barbaric act of the age. "Mussolini's hope for glory is based on Roman tradition," he wrote, blasting the Italian leader in characteristic bravado. "Probably, if he is not made a 'saint' immediately or sometime after his death, he will be referred to as one of the 'gods' of modern Italy. The only thing is that he will not be a myth, like the old Roman gods, but will be remembered as a real 'brute god' who plagued the twentieth century with his inhumanity."⁹⁷

While most Garveyites in the Americas showed unwavering support for Ethiopia, in London Garvey's own commitment to the African cause was short-lived. Having arrived in Britain in June 1936 to form a government in exile, Haile Selassie had kept himself aloof from Garvey and other black militants, preferring instead to advance his country's cause through formal diplomatic channels. The king's distant and demure air, perceived as proof of racial insensitivity by some, provided powerful ammunition to his detractors, one of them Garvey himself.

A common, unsubstantiated explanation for the quarrel between Garvey and Tefari is that the latter rebuffed the Jamaican's request for a personal conference.⁹⁸ While such might be a rational response by any head of state, given Garvey's maligned image in mainstream circles, there is no evidence that a meeting of this nature was ever proposed. At any rate, the monarch did confer with a group of African American visitors at his Bath residence, belying any accusation of Abyssinian arrogance. The likely explanation for the fallout is that Garvey saw with some envy, or outright jealousy, the attention Haile Selassie received as a guest of the British government. Moreover, as a black nationalist, he perceived Tefari's hobnobbing with the English aristocracy as a mark of race betrayal. Infuriated by this seemingly unpatriotic act, the UNIA leader unleashed sharp attacks on the Power of Trinity. Haile Selassie allowed slavery to flourish under his reign, *Black Man* charged, giving Italy the needed excuse for war. By keeping his subjects in a backward state of poverty

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and ignorance, by surrounding himself with supplicant chiefs and white flatterers, Haile Selassie caused Ethiopia's defeat.⁹⁹

Such profascist editorials catapulted the almost forgotten Garvey back to public attention, albeit as a controversial and divisive figure. Following his vilification of Haile Selassie, the Jamaican legend was accused of being a sellout to Mussolini's propaganda machine. Among his denouncers were a group of Harlem notables who wrote to the widely read *Amsterdam News* to register their disappointment in the fallen race hero: "We, a group of American Negro citizens, who are deeply interested in the same cause of Ethiopia, and who have contributed to the Haile Selassie fund as administered by Dr. Melaku E. Bayen . . . have read with surprise, and not a little chagrin and indignation, the release from Marcus Garvey of London, in which he advises American Negroes not to support the cause of Ethiopia because it is a 'lost cause.'"¹⁰⁰

Over the touchy issue of slavery, a certain Una Brown of New York wrote directly to Garvey, explaining the qualitative difference between Western slavery and its African variant: "You speak about slavery in Abyssinia as though it was the kind of slavery we were put in by the Europeans. . . . King Menilek's mother was a slave. That's the facility Abyssinian slavery may have." Garvey was unimpressed by the distinction between the more degrading form of chattel slavery, commonly associated with plantation America, and the benign form of African servitude, in which captives had easier access to manumission and upward social mobility. Garvey's response to the *New Yorker* in fact bore a biting sarcasm: "I cannot understand you at all when you try to condone slavery among Negroes. If you like the kind of slavery that the Abyssinians have been kept in by their government, why didn't you go there and live under it. Probably you would have been an Empress later on."¹⁰¹

The Italo-Ethiopian war provided a unique platform that Garvey might have easily exploited to rehabilitate his image. But Garvey, for all his showmanship and bravado, lacked the politician's instinct, and the war instead proved to be the instrument of his final undoing. Garvey's magnetic personality, his charisma and unparalleled oratory had helped him connect with the masses and their visceral racial sentiments. At the young age of twenty-seven, he founded the United Negro Improvement Association in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1914. Three years later he moved his headquarters to Harlem's Liberty Hall, from where he commanded a large international following, supposedly in the millions.

A disciple of Booker T. Washington's philosophy of economic self-uptlift, the Jamaican immigrant launched a maritime business venture by establishing a shipping company, the Black Star Line, which later turned into a liability. The shipping line demonstrated that the UNIA leader, although a successful fund-raiser, lacked organizational skills and adequate business acumen, making him an easy prey to charlatans

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and flatterers with get-rich-quick schemes. To make matters worse, his domineering personality, intolerance to criticism, and, most of all, his endorsement of the KKK for its anti-integrationist stance, made it all the easier for opposition to crystallize. By 1923, the Black Star Line was bankrupt, its ships either auctioned below market price or declared unseaworthy. Two years later, Garvey's political opponents, together with government agents, scored a major victory when the self-acclaimed Provisional President of Africa was tried and sentenced for five years in prison for using the U.S. mail for misleading business ventures.¹⁰²

In 1927, after Garvey had served a half term in the Atlanta federal penitentiary, President Coolidge commuted his sentence and then had him deported to Jamaica. For a time, as a realistic measure of self-initiation to island politics, Garvey tried his luck in local elections. He ran for a seat in the legislature, but was severely defeated at the polls because many of his working class followers could not vote. Unable to command national support in Jamaica, where class and color gradations mattered even more than in black America, Garvey relocated to London in the midst of the Great Depression, hoping to reinvent himself politically.¹⁰³

Garvey's return to the West Indies in the fall of 1937, in the midst of ongoing labor unrest, was mostly a source of embarrassment. Prior to his arrival in Trinidad in October, the *Sunday Guardian* had reported Garvey's denunciation of the labor boycotts as Communist-inspired. Garvey's image hit rock bottom when he labeled Butler and other local strike leaders as agents provocateurs, the overseas-based James and Padmore being the ones calling the shots. Local UNIA activists not only distanced themselves from Garvey but ostracized him for his slanderous antilabor statements. While on the nearby island of St. Lucia, Garvey renounced his remarks about the Trinidadian strikers, but his atonement was of little consequence. The boomerang effect of his anti-Haile Selassie and antitrade union editorials was so apparent that Garvey left for England without seeing his native Jamaica, where the labor situation was even more volatile.¹⁰⁴

Garvey's deteriorating public image coincided with a sharp decline in his health. Exacerbated by London's smog, his asthmatic condition grew progressively worse through the late thirties. In September 1938, his wife and two children left for the warmer climate in Jamaica, but Garvey, contrary to his doctor's advice, decided to stick it out in London.

In January 1940 Garvey suffered a stroke which left him speechless and paralyzed on one side. Confusing Garvey with Melaku Bayen, the Harlem-based black nationalist and founder of the Ethiopian World Federation, who had recently died, in May 1940 the overzealous media reported Garvey dead. Garvey was confronted with the morbid fact of having to read his own obituaries, most of them unfavorable, perhaps a factor in the further deterioration of his health.¹⁰⁵ Garvey died on 10 June

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1940, weeks after his rumored demise, at the relatively young age of fifty-three.¹⁰⁶ His remains were later transferred from London to Kingston and given a state burial. While visiting Jamaica in April 1966, Haile Selassie, to the surprise of those who still remembered the acrimonious thirties, would become the first African head of state to pay homage to the Marcus Garvey memorial monument.

Dilemma over Japan

As the leading political power of the nonwhite world, in the 1930s Japan had aroused popular interest among black intellectuals. Some black thinkers cited Japan's rapid industrial growth to debunk the myth of the white man's scientific supremacy, while others toyed with the idea of forging a unity of colored people under Japan's leadership. Not surprisingly, particular proponents of this latter view were a number of Japanese intellectuals motivated by a sense of political pragmatism and national honor. Tokyo's colonial adventures in China had turned Japan into an international pariah, leading to its estrangement from the League of Nations. Japan then looked for racial allies in the nonwhite masses of Africa and North America. Politically, such racial associations would give Japan a leadership role among weaker nations thereby enhancing its prestige, or so the Japanese believed. Economically, too, not only would such less-developed nations provide Japan with badly needed raw materials, they would also serve as ready markets for Japanese manufacturers.¹⁰⁷

Of the existing independent black states, no one took the Japanese diplomatic overtures more seriously than Ethiopia. In 1930 Japan had sent a delegation to Ethiopia to attend Haile Selassie's coronation ceremony. In return, the Ethiopian foreign minister, Blatien-Geta Heruy Wolde-Selassie, visited Japan exactly a year later, at which time the marital engagement between an Ethiopian count and a Japanese countess was announced. The same year saw the signing of the Ethio-Japanese commercial treaty as well as the promulgation of Ethiopia's first constitution modeled after that of Japan. Moreover, there were certain historical similarities between the two countries, as well as Heruy's own positive impressions of the Orient as described in his *Japan: Mahdere Birhan*, all of which gave rise to a group of Ethiopian intellectuals, the Young Japanizers, who saw Japan as the perfect development model for Ethiopia."¹⁰⁸

Whereas some saw the love affair between Ethiopia and Japan as a positive signal toward the imminent unity of nonwhite forces, others received the same news with great skepticism. The European-based Caribbean radicals generally underplayed the significance of Japan to the anticolonial struggle. As early as 1933, Padmore described the Japanese as being another imperial power and questioned their sincerity in signing the commercial treaty with Ethiopia. In his "Ethiopia Today," Padmore

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recognized the presence of some fascinating “similarities” between Ethiopian and Japanese historical experiences. Both countries claimed the oldest imperial traditions in the world: the Ethiopians tracing their dynastic root to King Solomon, the Japanese to the Sun Goddess. Both countries had jealously guarded their national independence after winning major decisive battles against European powers: Ethiopia against Italy in 1896, Japan against Russia nine years later. Having undergone a long period of feudalism, both were now in a phase of rapid modernization, although Ethiopia lagged far behind Japan in this respect.¹⁰⁹

Despite such parallels, Padmore downplayed the racial significance of the Ethio-Japanese alliance. “It is to be hoped,” he wrote, “that the Ethiopians have no illusions about the Japanese imperialists, when their internal and external policies are quite as ruthless as the white imperialist nations.” Too smeared was Japan with the “blood of millions of Koreans and Chinese” to become the champion of the “darker races.”¹¹⁰

Unlike in Europe, the pro-Ethiopian lobby in America found itself divided in its attitude to Japan. Leftist ideologues condemned Japan’s invasion of China as vigorously as they denounced Italy’s atrocities in Ethiopia. Their opponents on the other side excused Japan’s aggression against China as an intraracial conflict, and some even went so far as to equate Japan with Ethiopia as a victim of international conspiracy. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, W.E.B. Du Bois made no secret of his sympathy for Japan. Being the only unconquered nonwhite nation, Japan was the “logical leader” of the colored peoples, he declared. Du Bois made important distinctions between the Sino-Japanese conflict and the Italo-Ethiopian hostility. Although a colonial power, the Japanese did not use racial justification for their pan-Asian conquest, since both the conqueror and the conquered belonged to the same race. He predicted that the Japanese would have no problem assimilating or being assimilated by their Asian subjects, whereas the opposite was true for the white colonialists in Africa. For Du Bois, therefore, the Ethiopians would have much more to fear and suffer from Italian occupation than would the Chinese under Japanese rule. “Conquest and exploitation are brute facts of the present era, yet if they must come, is it better that they come from members of your own or other races? To this question Italy is giving a terrible answer.”¹¹¹

Du Bois’ article reflected the sentiment of thousands of blacks of his time. The late 1930s saw the rise of a militant black group called the Ethiopian Pacific League, sometimes known as Tojo’s Movement because of its ties with the East Asian nation. Just as the Communists had looked towards the Soviet Union as the leader of the oppressed world, so had members of this group viewed Japan as the defender of the nonwhite peoples. With an estimated membership of five hundred to five thousand, the Ethiopian Pacific League was founded by a Jamaican immigrant,

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Leonard Robert Jordan. The movement, "another ideological child of Garveyism,"¹¹² was discreetly funded by Japanese propagandists as part of Japan's overall strategy to win support among the colored masses for its China policy. Jordan himself was later arrested by the FBI and sentenced to ten years in prison for working closely with foreign agents and for promoting pro-Nazi and pro-Japanese propaganda.¹¹³

The leading American critic of the Afro-Japanese alliance was none other than James Ford. The Communist ideologue stated that certain black leaders, supported by Japanese agents, had embraced the Japanese as "friends of the Ethiopian people" under the misguided notion that Japan was the defender "of the so-called darker races" against European domination. For Ford, the Ethiopian war was a struggle against imperialism, and Japan was an imperialist nation. One had only to recall Japanese colonialism in Korea or its 1931 invasion of Manchuria to understand the "fallacy of this darker race theory."¹¹⁴

In a similar attack on the black media for its pro-Japanese inclination, Max Yergan followed up Ford's denunciation of the proponents of Afro-Japanese unity. Like Ford, Yergan argued that imperialism knew no color bounds. He associated the Japanese presence in China with the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, the German irredentist claim over parts of Central Europe, or the rise of international fascism in Spain. On the one hand, a victory of any of these imperialist forces directly or indirectly affected the fate of blacks and other minorities, Yergan stated, adding that: "On the other hand, a strong free democratic China, as would a free Ethiopia and Spain, will become an inspiration and bulwark to struggling peoples everywhere."¹¹⁵

The wartime preoccupation with Japan and Ethiopia, as discussed above, had two overall consequences on the black intelligentsia. First, the split between attitudes regarding Japan and Ethiopia demonstrated that black intellectuals no longer entertained a homogeneous view on international issues. At the turn of the century, a major preoccupation among African American and West Indian thinkers had been the promotion of a global panblack alliance. The Italo-Ethiopian war introduced various ideological spectrums as it expanded the debate on black nationalism into class versus race, sentiment versus principle, and justice versus expedience.

Secondly, the 1935 African crisis confirmed the assertion by John Hope Franklin, an eminent African American historian, that the Italo-Ethiopian war created an internationally minded Negro citizenry.¹¹⁶ No event better supports Franklin's observation than the African American involvement in the Spanish Civil War. A group of eighty-one black volunteers, members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, arrived in Europe in 1937 as part of the international Communist coalition against the nationalist forces in Spain. The immediate cause of the Iberian bloodshed went back

to July 1936 when the Moroccan-based Spanish forces, led by General Francisco Franco, rose against the Popular Front government in Madrid. What began as a right-wing military revolt against a leftist-leaning but duly elected government gradually turned into a fullfledged war pitting monarchists, republicans, and socialists against fascists, nationalists, and antimonarchists. Mussolini and Hitler actively and explicitly backed the latter. The republicans, despite tens of thousands of foreign recruits, could count on only a small-scale arms supplies from Moscow. Ill-trained and ill-equipped, from the beginning the republican militia and its international volunteers were no match for Franco's regular army and its Italian and German cohorts, but they fought on tenaciously until their final defeat in September 1938.

While ideological principles spurred white Communists into the thick of the European battle, black volunteers had an additional reason to be in Spain, namely to settle an old score with Mussolini and fascism. Oscar Hunter, literary-minded volunteer, best captured the mood of his compatriots in a short story entitled "Seven Hundred Calendar Days," in which a character explained his reason for joining the war: "I wanted to go to Ethiopia and fight Mussolini. . . . *This ain't Ethiopia but it'll do.*" Although colored recruits, like their white American and Canadian counterparts, left for Europe to fight a class war, Hunter's articulate and pragmatic character underscored the intimate link between African American internationalism and the Ethiopian crisis.¹¹⁷

The American Aftermath

The unprecedented pro-Ethiopian agitation gradually petered out, supplanted by the media's preoccupation with fresh crises elsewhere. By 1937, even among the more action-oriented Communists efforts were underway to ship to Spain whatever aid had been collected in the name of Ethiopia, which meant the far-off nation was written off as a lost cause. "Ethiopia's fate is at stake on the battlefields of Spain," a Comintern slogan read, a slogan that many interpreted as duplicitous and defeatist.¹¹⁸

Blacks who had cast in their lot with the Communist party gradually concluded that the CP was doing little beyond paying lip service to the Ethiopian cause. Disillusioned, such Party members and fellow travelers distanced themselves from the CP in protest. In 1938 the Trinidadian C.L.R. James, a fresh newcomer to the United States, observed the connection between the Italo-Ethiopian war and the crisis of the African American left. According to James, blacks remained loyal to the Party even as they found out that Russia was selling oil to Italy. Only when they noticed the absence of genuine concern for Ethiopia's fate did they question their membership in the Party: "Every day it is only Spain, Spain, China, Spain, but nothing done for Ethiopia except one or two meager processions around Harlem....The contrast with Spain has been too glaring, and when

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the C.P. entirely neglected the West Indian situation, the Negroes became finally conscious that they were once more the dupes of 'another white party.'"¹¹⁹

Questionable as may be the connection between the West Indian labor throe and the impotent left, the scandalous role of the Communists in the hands-off Ethiopia campaign no doubt contributed to the Party's eventual demise in the United States. In 1937 the Communist-led United Aid for Ethiopia was replaced by the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF), a nationalist group founded by Melaku Bayen. As they would soon realize however, the black nationalists would fare no better than their Communist counterparts. Although the EWF continued to propagate the Ethiopian cause through its weekly pamphlet, the *Voice of Ethiopia*, it could no longer marshal cross-sectional support so as to become a mainstream political movement. The problem was further compounded by the eroding image of Ethiopia as a symbol of race pride following Italy's seemingly perpetual conquest of the country and Haile Selassie's flight abroad. Finally, the untimely death of Melaku Bayen in 1940 threw the movement into disarray, depriving it of a central leadership figure.

Although a small number of black Americans arrived in Ethiopia in the forties to help in postwar reconstruction, the East African country would eventually lose its unique aura as a racial signifier. This is not to say the war left no lasting consequences. At the abstract level, the longterm effect of the antifascist mobilization of the thirties can be seen in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. While borrowing heavily from Gandhism and Christian liberation theology, the strategy of nonviolence that came of age during this period was rooted in the cumulative history of black protest tradition. The marches, street rallies, church assemblies, and letter writing campaigns, all of them features of the 1935 pan-African protest, would be refined and put to more effective use by the civil rights activists decades later.

In terms of intercontinental linkages, however, the Italo-Ethiopian war produced no sustainable results. In the late thirties the crisis in Europe overrode the black media's preoccupation with the African tragedy, and the trend would continue into World War II as African American focus shifted from the war on fascism to the war on Nazism. As James Meriwether observes, "by the end of 1945, beyond a broad concern about colonialism, few strong ties existed between black America and contemporary Africa. Other than the radical left, African Americans showed little concrete interest in helping emerging African liberation struggles."¹²⁰

The radical group that Meriwether has in mind is the International Committee on African Affairs (ICAA) that Paul Robeson and Max Yergan helped launch in January 1937. Later known as the Council on African Affairs (CAA), the group tried to sustain the pan-African momentum in

North America throughout the 1940s. It published a political journal, *New Africa*; convened a vocal anticolonial conference in April 1944, in which over a hundred delegates took part; lobbied along with the NAACP for African self-government; drafted petitions demanding the unification of Eritrea with Ethiopia; and called for the extension of UN trusteeship to Libya and Somaliland, both former Italian colonies. The council however never grew out of its fringe status. Because of its avowed leftism, in a time when communism was already out of vogue, the CAA remained narrow and elitist, unable to translate its pro-African agitation into a mass-oriented political action.¹²¹

The postwar decades witnessed the steady decline of sentimental race politics among African Americans in favor of a more tangible and less idealistic political course. From the 1950s onward, moreover, Ethiopia would occupy even less prominence in black American thought, for the latter could now identify with the newly independent countries of West Africa with which they shared common ancestral ties. Similarly, from the 1960s onward, African American politics would become even more inward-oriented because of civil rights progress at home, while one African crisis after another made, by comparison, a positive identification with the continent ever more unattainable.

It is outside the United States that the Italo-Ethiopian war left a lasting imprint. In Africa and in the Caribbean, the Ethiopian tragedy created a heightened sense of pan-African nationalism that went beyond the war years, and it is there that we should turn to assess the longterm consequences of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute.

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As discussed in the previous chapter, the Italo-Ethiopian war partially contributed to the West Indies sociopolitical transformation during the late thirties. In conjunction with the Great Depression, the Ethiopian crisis created acute racial tension, precipitating a major labor revolt that resulted in various reforms.

In Africa, the war did not leave behind as immediate and explicit footprints. In the long term, however, the Ethiopian dispute would play a crucial chapter in the history of African nationalism. As S.K.B. Asante argues, by the 1920s African anticolonial resistance had entered a new phase, with the missionary-educated intellectuals taking over the political role of the traditional chiefs. Because of their exposure to Western Christianity and modern education, the intellectuals appreciated European science and political values, hoping their societies would in due course reach a similar stage. Such optimism was short-lived however. The League of Nation's betrayal of Ethiopia stoked emergent anticolonial feelings, and the call for immediate self-government replaced the doctrine of gradual evolution.¹

The eminent Ghanaian writer and historian, A. Adu Boahen, agrees with Asante. Adu Boahen presents the 1935-41 hostilities as the first in a series of events that sparked the drive toward African independence. The fascist invasion of the historic nation shattered the illusion of gradual self-government, thus making the resort to armed struggle inevitable. Had it not been for the outbreak of the European war, "the revolution for independence would have been launched in the late thirties rather than in the late forties," Adu Boahen observes.²

In corroborating the above thesis, a number of African statesmen who came of age during the 1930s also saw the Italo-Ethiopian crisis as an important turning point in their political maturity. Kwame Nkrumah read about the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war while in London, on his way to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. In his autobiography, he wrote that upon hearing the news of the invasion, he felt as if the whole world had declared war on him personally. In his rage, he envisaged the role he might one day play in helping bring about the end of colonialism.

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"My nationalism surged to the fore," he recalled, adding "I was ready and willing to go through hell itself, if need be, in order to achieve my object."³

Nelson Mandela was a teenager when the Italian onslaught on Ethiopia began. In his memoir, written over half a century later, Mandela recollected the war as being a watershed event for his generation. "I was seventeen when Mussolini attacked Ethiopia, an invasion that spurred not only my hatred of that despot but of fascism in general." Ethiopia, because of its spell of independence, made a deep impression on the South African youth, a visit to northeast Africa fascinating him more than a visit to Western Europe or to North America: "I felt I would be visiting my own genesis, unearthing the roots of what made me an African."⁴

Other would-be African leaders whose rise to prominence was hastened by the war included Nigeria's Nnamdi Azikiwe who, as a newspaper editor in the Gold Coast, remained closely associated with the antifascist struggle; Sierra Leone's trade unionist I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson, whose seditious article on the war resulted in his banishment from West Africa; and Kenya's nationalist Jomo Kenyatta who, from London, published a short essay in the *Labor Monthly* entitled "Hands off Abyssinia."⁵ At one time or another, Kenyatta, Nkrumah, and Wallace-Johnson crossed paths in England, as did many of their Caribbean counterparts. It is therefore crucial to discuss below in some depth the London-based pan-African circle, for that was where the war found its most articulate nationalist critics.

As the intellectual center of the English-speaking colonials, and home to the 1900 and 1921 pan-African gatherings, London provided the natural focal point for the pro-Ethiopian lobby. The International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA) was formed in London in August 1935, spurred by the impending fascist menace. The group sought to arouse British sympathy for Ethiopia and its territorial integrity, using all the means in its power. Although predominantly West Indian, the IAFA included well-known African members, hence its nonsectarian character. Its founding members included C.L.R. James, chairman; Dr. Peter Milliard, originally from British Guyana then a successful medical practitioner in Manchester, vice chairman; T. Albert Marryshaw from Grenada, second vice chairman; Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, honorary secretary; and Mrs. Amy Ashwood Garvey, Garvey's second wife, treasurer. Mohammed Said of Somaliland, Samuel Manning of Trinidad, and George Padmore from Trinidad made up the rest of the executive committee. Makonnen, from Guyana, was still in Denmark and would not join the group until the following year.⁶

The British pan-Africanists marshalled even fewer material resources than their black American counterparts. As political shock troops, they nevertheless served a special purpose in countering pernicious anti-Ethiopian allegations. Notwithstanding Garvey's portrait of Haile Selassie

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as an Uncle Tom sellout, the West Indians, for example, used the emperor's arrival in London as an occasion to demonstrate their loyal support to the exiled Ethiopian government.

The initial plan was to receive Haile Selassie at the British port of Plymouth under the auspices of the IAFA, but the venue was later moved to London for logistical reasons. The IAFA arrived at the Waterloo train station in full force, accompanied by two young girls with fresh flowers. Police and government officials thronged the station as the emperor's train arrived, posing a less-than-ideal atmosphere for the type of reception the group had anticipated. "Finally the imperial delegation came out on to the platform, with Princess Tsehai in the lead," Makonnen later recalled, adding: "We were there in strength, but really had to push our way forward. We were determined, however, not to be kept away by these imperialists who were pretending to be in sympathy, shedding their crocodile tears."⁷

The IAFA continued to champion the Ethiopian cause even after its reconstitution in 1937 as the International African Service Bureau (IASB). Padmore replaced James, soon to leave for the United States, as head of the IASB, while the newcomer Makonnen played a crucial role as treasurer and a master fund-raiser. The IASB's remaining officers included Kenyatta, assistant secretary; Wallace-Johnson, general secretary; and the Barbadian-born trade unionist Chris Jones, organizing secretary. After James' departure for America, William Harrison, an African American scholar at the London School of Economics, edited IASB's monthly, the *International African Opinion*.⁸

The IASB did not recruit any Ethiopians into its inner circle, but it nonetheless cultivated close ties with the Ethiopian Legation in London headed by Hakim Warqneh and Emmanuel Abraham. "I knew particularly well Ato Emmanuel Abraham, the first secretary of the embassy there, and at a certain point he was round at my house, seeing me every day," Makonnen would reminisce. Emmanuel furnished the IASB with the latest news from Ethiopia, much of it appearing in the *International African Opinion* for wider readership.⁹

Although, by the late thirties, the conflagration in Spain and Central Europe had supplanted the Ethiopian tragedy as front-page news, the *International African Opinion* continued to appeal to the Europeans' moral consciousness through regular coverage of the all-but-forgotten Ethiopian warfront. The IASB's monthly repeatedly condemned the West's de facto recognition of the northeast African nation as an Italian colony. Its editorials presented overblown accounts of Ethiopian battlefield victories, giving the impression that outside the cities and major garrison towns the Ethiopian countryside was still under the control of the patriotic front.¹⁰

Although the IASB often worked in tandem with white liberals like Nancy Cunard and Sylvia Pankhurst, it saw itself primarily as an

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organization of Africans for Africa. To that end, it vowed to support by all means possible "the uncoordinated struggles of Africans and peoples of African descent against oppression which they suffer in every country." It also expressed its determination to fight to the end "until economically, politically, and socially, the black man was everywhere as free as other men were."¹¹

Besides from the situation in Ethiopia, a major source of preoccupation among the London-based pan-Africanists in the same period was the growing social unrest in the Caribbean. During the 1937-38 labor uprising that affected the entire Caribbean archipelago, the IASB together with Harold Moody's LCP endorsed the West Indian workers' demand for higher wages, better working and living conditions, and the release of the jailed strike leaders. It used the occasion to call for West Indian self-government, as well as for the political unification of the various islands with a regional university system. The IASB-LCP vision of a pan-Caribbean state would continue to resonate through the early sixties, resulting in the short-lived federation of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados. Unlike the less successful political experiment of pan-Caribbeanism, the establishment of the University of the West Indies would prove more practical, still a major regional institution with campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados.¹²

In other joint activities, the IASB and LCP submitted a memorandum to the Colonial Office, outlining the potential danger in the South Africans request to annex the three nearby British protectorates; campaigned against the Southern Rhodesian land apportionment act of 1941, which reserved most of the agricultural land for white settlers; petitioned the British Colonial Medical Service to rescind the exclusion policy against black physicians; and demanded the peoples' universal right to self-determination as stipulated in the Atlantic Charter.¹³

As a pan-African organization, IASB's most remarkable achievement came in the mid-1940s. In response to IASB's initiative in 1944 a number of African-oriented societies in England formed an umbrella organization, the Pan-African Federation (PAF). The IASB in conjunction with the PAF convened the Fifth Pan-African congress in Manchester in October 1945. With the exception of the American W.E.B. Du Bois who, at the age of seventy-seven, presided over the historic gathering, all other participants were nationals of the Caribbean or of Africa. In all, more than two hundred delegates consisting of farmers' representatives, students' leaders, intellectuals, trade unionists, and professionals attended the four-day conference.

Padmore, Makonnen, and Milliard did most of the organizational work on the Caribbean side. Peter Abrahams of South Africa, Hastings Banda of Malawi, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, Wallace-Johnson, Kenyatta, and Nkrumah (who had just returned from his studies in America) remained the key participants from Africa. There was no direct representation from

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Ethiopia; but the timing of the conference, which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the fascist aggression, demonstrated the catalytic role of the Ethiopian tragedy.¹⁴

Unlike the previous four pan-African gatherings whose political demands lay within the confines of self-government, the Fifth Pan-African Congress insisted on total and complete independence for the colonies. Its deliberations dwelt on political issues such as the implementing of the Atlantic Charter and the establishing of democratic rule in Africa and in the West Indies. Tied to these themes were resolutions on economic questions that, among others, called for land redistribution in the settler colonies and for abolition of forced labor and pass laws.¹⁵ Educational, racial, and social concerns were also raised. Of particular interest, in conjunction with the last point, was the presence of two female participants, Amy Ashwood Garvey and Alma La Badie of Jamaica, who spoke on the double oppression of women and children under colonialism.¹⁶

In a resolution entitled "The Challenge to the Colonial Powers," the conference espoused the doctrine of nonviolence, while justifying the resort to arms should the peaceful struggle fail. "The delegates to the Fifth Pan-African Congress believe in peace," the resolution stated. "Yet, if the Western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as the last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom, even if force destroys them and the world."¹⁷

In "Declaration to the Colonial Workers, Farmers and Intellectuals," the congress demanded for complete political independence, and for economic equality, and social emancipation: "We say to the people of the colonies that they have to fight for these ends by all means at their disposal." The meeting further urged colonial workers to "organize effectively" and reminded them of their formidable weapons: "the strike and the boycott." It likewise challenged "the intellectual and professional class" to awaken to its leadership role by forming trade unions and cooperatives, and by demanding the rights to assemble and to demonstrate freely. "Today, there is only one road to effective action: the organization of the masses; and in that organization the educated colonials must join. Colonials and subject peoples of the world unite!"¹⁸

At the close of the conference, the delegates reiterated the need to forge a stronger racial alliance among Africans and peoples of African descent. "Fraternal greetings" were sent to the colored republics of Ethiopia, Liberia, and Haiti, letting it be known that blacks the world over saw these nations "with jealous pride," regarding them "as symbols of the realizations of the political hopes and aspirations of African peoples still under imperialist domination."¹⁹ With the aid of T. R. Makonnen, the self-appointed Ethiopian spokesperson, the conference drafted an additional resolution demanding the immediate British withdrawal from

northeast Africa and the return of Ogaden and Eritrea to the Ethiopian "motherland."²⁰

From Manchester to Africa

In philosophical terms, the Fifth Pan-African Congress marked the coming of age of independent black thinking and political activism that was neither pro-West nor pro-Communist. As Padmore put it, in words evocative of the Afrocentric perspective, "Here at long last was a philosophy evolved by Negro thinkers which Africans and peoples of African descent could claim and use as their own."²¹

Of all Africa-oriented conferences hitherto, the Manchester gathering left deeper imprints on subsequent political developments and thus served as the direct link between the nascent pan-African nationalism of the mid-thirties and its full-grown variant of the fifties. By bringing together the leading pan-Africanists of the century, the congress provided the ideological blueprint that became the linchpin of the African independence struggle. It redefined and articulated the universality of such contemporary concepts as democracy, self-determination, and equality, while exposing the hypocrisy of the so-called free world for its denial of these rights to others. The conference lent moral justification for the overthrow of the colonial status quo by any means possible, while reserving the right to arms as only the last option.

The crucible of the Gold Coast in the 1950s best embodied the extent to which the Manchester meeting influenced African nationalists. Having returned to West Africa in the late 1940s, Nkrumah gained wide recognition first as a general secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention, an elitist political establishment; and then as the founder and leader of the mass-based Convention Peoples' Party (CPP). Inspired by the meeting in Manchester, the CPP drew a six-point action program, whose aims included establishing self-government through constitutional and democratic means, forming trade unions, and facilitating a West African federation.²²

Downing Street's attempt to silence the CPP by imprisoning its leaders, including Nkrumah, only served to further popularize the party and what it stood for: "self-government now." In 1956, following protracted negotiations between the CPP and the Colonial Office, Nkrumah was released from prison and made chief minister, and a year later the Gold Coast (henceforth Ghana) became the first country in black Africa to gain independence. Nkrumah, however, remained cynical about piecemeal decolonization, emphasizing instead the need for total liberation and immediate unification under one flag. Despite paying lip service to the philosophy of nonviolence, or "positive action," he turned his capital Accra into a Mecca for African freedom fighters, and he himself later published a booklet on guerilla warfare.²³ Hoping to set an example for

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the continent, he pioneered the ill-fated Ghana-Guinea-Mali federation. The West African federation failed for the same reason its Caribbean counterpart failed: namely the richer states were opposed to bankrolling the economy of the poorer states.

Reminiscent of the Manchester spirit, Nkrumah showed a genuine commitment to the call for racial unity among peoples of color globally. He invited Padmore and Makonnen to serve in his government, while letting dozens of African American pan-Africanists (including Du Bois and Maya Angelou) to settle in Accra. Ghana was the only African nation that Martin Luther King, Jr., visited,²⁴ and it was also the nation where Malcolm X was received most warmly. "I can only wish that every American black man could have shared my ears, my eyes and my emotion throughout the round of engagements which had been made for me in Ghana," was Malcolm X's description of his reception in the West African country.²⁵

If Ghana's independence in the late fifties created a sense of optimistic euphoria among a generation of pan-African visionaries, events of the early sixties implied defeat and disappointment. Between 1958 and 1963 a series of conferences were held in Accra and Addis Ababa on the theme of African unity. The unificationists favored a singular African state, which meant the immediate liquidation of national boundaries; while their opponents, mostly French-speaking, opted for a policy of close but informal cooperation among the independent states. During a meeting in Addis Ababa in May 1963, the two sides embraced the Ethiopian proposal calling for the formation of a supranational political institution, the Organization of African Unity (OAU).²⁶ While the launching of the OAU in the Ethiopian capital under the leadership of Haile Selassie impressed many observers as a practical arrangement, the Manchester radicals saw the compromise as good as a sugarcoated suicide pill. In their eyes Haile Selassie, the antifascist hero of the thirties, became the very nemesis who dealt pan-Africanism its crushing death blow; while Ethiopia, the country whose woes gave birth to modern pan-African nationalism, represented its burial ground.²⁷

Rather symbolically, the year 1963 also marked the death of W.E.B. Du Bois, the "father" of pan-Africanism, preceded by the demise of Padmore, another towering figure, only four years earlier. The 1966 coup that toppled Nkrumah and forced him into exile in neighboring Guinea at last drew to a close the chapter on pan-Africanism as a state ideology. After languishing in prison for some time under the new military government, Makonnen, the only remaining Caribbean pan-Africanist in Ghana, left for Nairobi, where he worked with the Kenyan Ministry of Tourism until his death in the early eighties.²⁸

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4. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little Brown, 1994), 255.
5. Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 16-17, 107-114.
6. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 124.
7. Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, 115-116.
8. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 124-126.
9. Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, 120.
10. For example, see "The Ethiopian Question," *International African Opinion* 1, 1 (July 1938): 10-11; "The New Invasion of Ethiopia," *ibid.*, 1, 4 (October 1938): 9-11; "The Final Betrayal of Ethiopia," *ibid.*, 1, 5 (November 1939): 12-13.
11. Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 124-125.
12. *Ibid.*, 130-134.
13. *Ibid.*, 128-130, 136-153.
14. *Ibid.*, 130-148.
15. Proceedings of the Congress were first compiled and published by Padmore in 1947 and then reprinted in 1963 with introductory remarks by Du Bois, Azikiwe, and Nkrumah. George Padmore, ed., *History of the Pan-African Congress: Colonial and Colored Unity, a Program of Action* (London: Hammersmith Bookshop, 1963).
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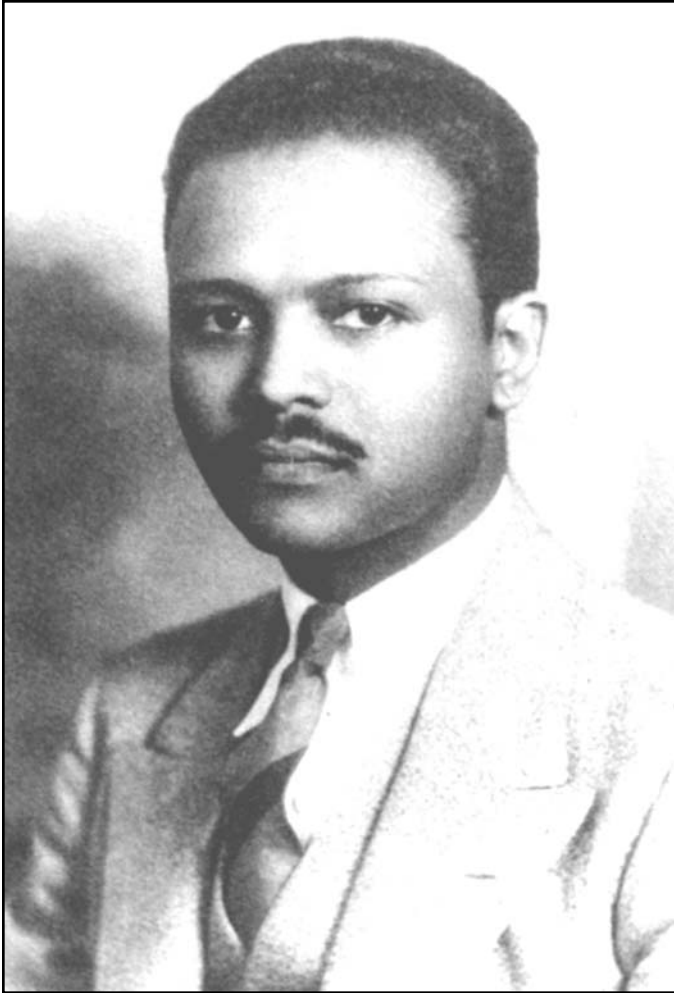
27. The unificationists accepted the Addis Ababa proposal because they felt diplomatically outmaneuvered by Haile Selassie and his revered international stature. The fact that Nkrumah and other younger radicals later supported the Eritrean liberation movement reveals that some of these ideologues held a deep resentment towards Ethiopia for supposedly aborting their vision of "united Africa." See Peter Schwab's *Haile Selassie: Ethiopia's Lion of Judah* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 101-114.
28. For a reprint of Makonnen's obituary from the January 1984 issue of the *Kenyan Weekly Review*, see Kwesi Kwaa Prah's *Beyond the Color Line: Pan-Africanist Disputations* (Florida Hills: Vivlia, 1997), 21-24.

5 the war as instrument of ethiopian racial consciousness

If Africa as a distinct continent was first conceptualized in a European drawing room, colonialism was what transformed that concept into a de facto sociopolitical reality. The cartographic construction of Africa that, from the colonial vantage point, made a coherent and generalized understanding of Africa possible had unintended consequences. It lit the torch of continental awareness among the educated elite, enabling them to forge cross-sectional alliances as a formidable tool against the colonial dictum of divide and rule. Continentalism inspired cultural movements such as *negritude* and also promoted closer associations with diasporan blacks, out of which grew the politics of pan-Africanism.

Without the backdrop of colonialism, from which Ethiopia was spared for the most part, the prewar Ethiopian intelligentsia remained inward-looking and provincial. Despite some discursive writings on Japan, a country whose path of development many Ethiopians thought to emulate, Ethiopians perhaps knew more about France or Italy than their nearest neighbors on the continent. Yet, in only a few decades, the once-isolated country would emerge as a leading actor in African politics in and outside the continent.

Four phases can be outlined in the Africanization process of the Ethiopian national psyche: first, the incipient or the encounter period, 1896-1935; second, the anti-European reaction period, 1935-1944; third, the Africanization period, 1944-1963; and fourth, the radicalization period, 1963-1974. These epochs are in turn associated with specific agencies: official emissaries to America during the prewar decades, wartime race activists in the thirties and forties, Haile Selassie and his Africa-oriented policy in the fifties, and student militancy and pop culture in the sixties and seventies. The incipient phase in Ethio-Atlantic race relations has been discussed in chapter 2. This chapter examines the evolution of racial awareness in Ethiopia in the thirties and forties as a byproduct of the Italo-Ethiopian war. The remaining two phases, the Africanization and the radicalization periods, will be discussed in the next chapter.



Melaku Emmanuel Bayen, the first Ethiopian graduate student in the United States, pan-African propagandist, and founder of the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc.

Melaku Bayen: A Pan-African Doyen

Melaku Emmanuel Bayen, the son of Grazmach Bayen and Weyzero Desta, was born in the province of Wollo on 27 April 1900. A close relation of Ras Tefari on his maternal side, Melaku grew up in the royal courts of Harrar and Addis Ababa. Despite his ambition to serve in the military, in 1921 Melaku and two other youths (Worku Gobana and Beshahwered Habetewold) were handpicked by Tefari and sent abroad for a modern education. Melaku and his friends began their studies in Bombay, India,

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but were later transferred to the United States, a country whose isolationist policy they found less overbearing than British colonial condescension. In light of their foreign nationalities and royal credentials, the Jim Crow capital made temporary allowances for the African visitors, and their meeting with President Warren Harding aroused no hostile attention. In fact, Harding took kindly to the youths' passion for education and had them enrolled at his alma mater, Muskingum College, in New Concorde, Ohio.¹

Since entry exams indicated the three lacked adequate academic preparation for college admission, they began their studies from the high school level. Worku, the one closest to Tefari by blood and the least studious of the three, concluded his education prematurely in favor of a lucrative post in Ethiopia. Beshahwered, the oldest in the group, returned home in 1929 with a degree in economics from Ohio State University and was posted as municipal director in the commercial town of Diredawa.²

Adversarial race politics checkered Beshahwered's career in Ethiopia. A short distance from the port in Djibouti by rail, Diredawa had been a *de facto* French sphere of influence. Beshahwered's effort to dismantle the extraterritorial privileges French nationals enjoyed in the city made him an unpopular figure among the Europeans. In line with his nationalistic thinking, Beshahwered invited two black Americans, Cyril Price and Reuben Young, to help him modernize Diredawa's school system and public health. Financial difficulties and personal misunderstandings cut the pan-African experiment short however, and Beshahwered was later transferred to Addis Ababa to placate the French. Although Beshahwered was privileged enough to leave for England in 1936, the following year he returned to Addis Ababa, where he met his death at the hands of Graziani's soldiers in the bloodbath that ensued in the wake of the foiled attempt on the viceroy's life.³

Of the original triumvirate, Melaku was the only one who stayed in the United States long enough to pursue professional training. Following his completion of a bachelor's program in chemistry at Muskingum in 1928, he spent a year in Columbus as a graduate student at Ohio State University before transferring to the medical school of Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 1927 Melaku had met Hakim Warqneh Eshete (Charles Martin), then on a government mission to the United States. The encounter would perhaps have gone unnoticed were it not for a particular remark that Melaku found inspirational: "Dr. Martin said to me the greatest service you could render to your country would be to influence thousands of black peoples in the U.S.A. and the West Indies and let them come and help us develop Ethiopia."⁴

While at Howard, the medical student threw himself deeper into the pan-African cause, which, among other things, brought him in touch with his future wife Dorothy Hadley of Chicago. "It was this idea," he

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wrote, alluding to his belief in racial solidarity, “that helped me to break my engagement to the daughter of our Minister of Foreign Affairs and to be married to an American girl of the Black Race in 1931.” Besides his subsequent prominence in the antifascist defense campaign, Melaku would be instrumental in sending several black pioneers to Ethiopia, among them Hubert Julian and John Robinson, aviators; Cyril Price, educator; Reuben Young and John West, public health experts.⁵

With Beshahwered and Worku’s return to their native country, for a while Melaku was the only Ethiopian in North America, a privilege that left him doubling as a de facto diplomat, occasionally accompanying visiting Ethiopian dignitaries as guide and interpreter. By the mid-thirties, the number of Ethiopian students in American colleges had risen to a half dozen or so. Since most of them came as transfer students from the Beirut-based American University, they seemed reasonably prepared for the academic challenge ahead as may be inferred by their enrollments in the leading ivy leagues. Engida Yohannes pursued veterinary medicine at New York University. In upstate New York, a few hours drive from New York City, was Makonnen Haile studying finance at Cornell University, possibly along with a few more compatriots majoring in animal husbandry. Makonnen Desta, the more prominent of the group because of his subsequent elevation to a ministerial post, studied anthropology at Harvard.⁶

How well these students adjusted socially to their new settings is not clear, although their experience was perhaps much less traumatic than that of Melaku and his peers a decade earlier. The campus atmosphere, idyllic and surreal, was a far cry from the realities of mainstream America caught in the ravages of depression, but it did not totally shut out contacts with other black students. While at Cornell, the West Indian George Griffith, alias T. R. Makonnen, remembers that his Ethiopian friends had treated him as if he were one of their own. Save for the Harvard Makonnen Desta, in whom the Guyanese found a kindred spirit, Griffith saw the other Ethiopians as ideologically “unsophisticated” and took it upon himself to enlighten them about the politics of Garvey and Garveyism.⁷

Subsequent developments attest such discussions were not without fruition. As it became gradually clear that Mussolini’s belligerent bravado was no mere bluff, Makonnen Haile published a short article in the NAACP’s *Crisis*. Much more than its substance, the essay in the black monthly revealed a new mind-set among the American-educated Ethiopians, namely that they now saw their country’s struggle for survival in a racial context of black versus white, or Africa versus Europe.⁸

As war became ever more apparent with each passing day, the students cut short their studies and scurried home to rally in defense of their country. Graduating in June 1935 with a medical degree, Melaku likewise left for Addis Ababa accompanied by his American wife and

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their three-year-old son. In normal times, the young physician would have aspired to a major government post, perhaps a ministerial position, but the summer of 1935 was far from normal. In December 1934, Italian soldiers from Italian Somaliland had crossed into the Ethiopian district of Walwal, provoking a bloody border clash. Although the Anglo-Ethiopian border commission put the blame squarely on Italy, the Walwal incident provided the *casus belli* for Mussolini's grandiose scheme. As a pretext for war, he demanded that Addis Ababa make a public apology as well as pay indemnity, terms that the Ethiopians dismissed as adding insults upon injury.

When the Italian invasion finally commenced, the hastily assembled and poorly trained Ethiopian army could only count on a handful of medical doctors, of whom Melaku, then an intern at the American mission hospital in the capital, was the only Ethiopian. While serving both at the eastern and northern fronts, the intern remained in constant danger, as enemy planes made no distinction between military and nonmilitary targets. Tragedy struck at close quarters when a bombardment of a Red Cross mission in the east killed Robert William Hockman, a white American medical volunteer and a good friend of Melaku's since their days at Muskingum College. Casualties of this nature forced white doctors to pull out of the war zone, leaving a ratio of one Ethiopian doctor to over a hundred thousand fighters, a disparity that further characterized Italy's aggression more as a war of genocide than a conventional engagement between two combatants. In early May 1936, as the collapse of the government became inevitable with Addis Ababa's imminent fall, the Bayens found themselves among the scores of royal courtiers entrained to Djibouti, from where they boarded a British ship bound for England.⁹

Then came Melaku's appointment as an emissary to black America. What initiated that appointment was, according to William Scott, the African Americans' desire for an authentic liaison who could channel their aid directly to Ethiopia. Three black American envoys broached the idea to Haile Selassie at his residence in Bath during the summer of 1936. They informed the emperor of the pro-Ethiopian fund-raising frenzy in America led by individuals of dubious credentials. They suggested that such patriotic orchestrations be coordinated by a more respectable figure, thus Tefari's decision to delegate his own cousin for the job.¹⁰

Enthusiastic about the *de facto* ambassadorial mission, Melaku disembarked in New York in September 1936. "While in Europe I was almost demoralized," he later confessed in an autobiographical sketch. "I was glad to leave England because, excepting Hon. Sylvia Pankhurst, Prof. P. H. Stanley Jevons, Hon. Hazle Napier and a few others, ... I never heard of anyone else among the whites who had courage enough to say we could and should save our country."¹¹

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In the absence of a central leadership figure, much of the pro-Ethiopian fanfare in America had been rapidly diminishing. Melaku's arrival in Harlem helped revive the nationalistic fervor. New organizational improvements included centralizing the fund-raising drive by issuing "Save Ethiopia" stamps, as well as publishing a weekly newsletter, the *Voice of Ethiopia* (VOE) which, in its heyday, circulated thousands of copies at home and abroad.

Besides raising money (a copy was sold for three cents in New York and five cents in other U.S. cities), the VOE doubled as a propaganda mouthpiece and as an educational forum. The propaganda articles, most of them covering the war, were meant to boost morale by giving a hyperbolic account of Ethiopian battlefield victories. More original in style was the educational section, which, for example, featured Amharic lessons in weekly sequels as well as ran historical columns by scholars such as William Steen and Leo Hansberry. There was also the "Ask Me" column, where Melaku discussed or answered selected questions on Ethiopian politics.

Mrs. Dorothy Bayen, Melaku's wife, prepared the letter to the editor column, "Ethiopian Friends Far and Near." A casual glimpse of this section indicates the newsletter's wide readership among Ethiopia's supporters in the Western Hemisphere. Some of the correspondence came from as far away as Central America and the Caribbean. For example, a letter from the Republic of Panama arrived with a contribution of \$11 and with the donors' note stating: "Our help may be meager, but our wage is a mere pittance. It does not afford us to do the big things that we would like to do."¹²

Other than the weekly Amharic lesson and the "Ask Me" column, Melaku's literary contribution to the paper was minimal. Nonetheless, there was one major article worth mentioning, namely, a two-part essay Melaku wrote in response to Garvey's attack on Haile Selassie. In a series of essays in *Black Man*, a monthly pamphlet, Garvey had accused the Ethiopian elite of racial arrogance. Ethiopians regarded themselves as dark-skinned Caucasians and looked down upon blacks as inferiors, the UNIA founder had charged.¹³ Garvey's allegations were reinforced by individuals like Willis Huggins. Huggins, a school teacher, had initially been a pro-Ethiopian agitator. But when rumors abounded about his misuse of the Ethiopian support fund, like Garvey, Huggins flip-flopped and resorted to character assassination of the Ethiopian leadership.¹⁴

Melaku's essay sought to vindicate Ethiopia's image abroad. First and foremost, he hoped to refute the aspersion cast by Garvey and Huggins, in which class status and skin color in Ethiopia were intimately linked. The doctor drew attention to his own olive complexion as proof that merit, not physical appearance, mattered in the highland nation. "May I also say that a large number of the royal family have been very dark in color," he

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stated. "His late Majesty, Menilek II, was of a very dark complexion. There is no color question in Ethiopia."¹⁵

Bayen attributed the slanderous columns in *Black Man* to Marcus Garvey's megalomania. "His thwarted enthusiasm for public glory has degenerated to a passion of self-destruction," the royal activist rebutted. Garvey's anti-Ethiopian propaganda was partly influenced by his Catholic faith and partly by Italian bribery. "In fact, he has sold his birth right for a mess of pottage."¹⁶

Regarding the accusation of Ethiopia as the last bastion of slavery, Melaku's essay pointed out the various antislavery measures, including one that made slave trafficking a crime punishable by death.¹⁷ Contrary to Garvey's portrait of Haile Selassie as backward and lethargic, the article explained the emperor's embrace of modern reforms. He introduced the first constitution in the country's history, sent students to Europe and America for further studies, and more than twice invited skilled blacks to settle in Ethiopia. "Had we been allowed to progress uninterrupted for five or ten years more," Melaku reflected, "certainly we would have developed our country to such an extent no other country would have found it convenient to intrude upon us."¹⁸

Melaku's description of Ethiopian society was no doubt more authentic than newspaper accounts as his was drawn on intimate knowledge. His self-image as a detached observer left much to be desired however. The doctor's rejection of Ethiopian social stratification based on skin color was true insofar as the so-called Kushitic and Semitic-speaking Ethiopians were concerned. Besides sharing similar physical features and complexion (dark-brown to light-brown) the Amhara, the Oromo, and the Tigre professed Islam or Christianity and by far constituted the majority of the Ethiopian populace.

What Melaku failed to mention was the presence of minority groups in Ethiopia whose status was in many ways not unlike that of diasporan blacks. Both Kushitic and Semitic-speakers were contemptuous of the animist and darker-skinned Nilotic and Omotic minorities like the Shanqella, most of whom resided in pockets of isolation along the southern and southwestern borderlands. Whereas Muslim and Christian Ethiopians were tied together through identical yet competing historical and religious identities, sharp cultural markers were drawn between them and the peripheral groups. Moreover, as non-Muslims and non-Christians, the latter lay most exposed to slave raiders, bearing the stigma of slavery even long after its abolition.

Be that as it may, in fairness to Bayen's argument, it should be noted that the source of discrimination in Ethiopia, unlike in Europe or North America, was not race but culture and religion. Moreover, Ethiopia was not unique in this. The Pygmies of Central Africa and the Khoisans of Southern Africa were, for instance, discriminated against by their more

powerful Bantu-speaking neighbors, as were the nomadic Masai by the sedentary Kikuyu, and the outcast Osu by their Igbo brethren. Likewise, in the United States and the Caribbean, light-skinned mulattoes tended to discourage marriage to dark-skinned Africans, and the level of European blood in one's vein often dictated the degree of one's social elevation. Melaku's essay did not paint such a wide picture. Nevertheless, his earnest plea and his humility helped reassure color-conscious blacks of his country's position on the race question, and in so doing rendered Garvey's attacks less potent if not irrelevant.

The Ethiopian World Federation

In August 1937 Melaku and his supporters broke with the Communist-led United Aid for Ethiopia and formed the Ethiopian World Federation Incorporated (EWF). As the word federation implied, the EWF held as its objective the unity of all blacks and black organizations under the Ethiopian banner. In his inaugural address, Melaku thus explained the movement's vision: "I do not want it thought that Ethiopia will not and should not accept aid from all races and all peoples, But I do believe that the major part must be done by us, and we must not depend on any other group." Stressing the need for positive action and goodwill to others, he further added: "We must remember that our battles will not be won by hatred for anyone, but by self-sacrifice, love for all mankind and harmony within our ranks."¹⁹

Although Melaku avoided mentioning Garvey's name in public, the EWF saw itself as an ideological heir to the then defunct UNIA. Its racialism, militant anticolonialism, and commitment to repatriation were all echoes from the past. Many of Melaku's associates were former Garveyites. Moreover, like the UNIA, the EWF began or ended its weekly meetings with "Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers," a song composed by the Barbadian Arnold Ford, an immigrant to Ethiopia. Melaku hoped the EWF would be to his generation what the UNIA had been to his forebears decades earlier. "We are here to make a new Ethiopia in the Western world and to join hands with ancient Ethiopia," he told supporters. "We are out for a membership of two million. It is not impossible, for the same has been done for less worthy causes than this," he continued, alluding to Garvey. "Other people have done it, and we are going to do the same. We firmly believe that this will be the most outstanding black organization in the world."²⁰

The EWF held regular weekly sessions on Friday evenings, later changed to Sunday afternoons, at 36-38 West 135th Street. According to VOE's own reports, the several hundred seats of the auditorium were often filled to capacity at those meetings, many more attendees standing. Appearances of well-known public figures as guest speakers served as magnet to members new and old alike. During the EWF's first meeting on

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13 August 1937, for example, the renowned race historian J. A. Rogers was one of several invited speakers. The 3 September gathering, likewise, saw the podium taken by the noted bibliophile on black history, Dr. Arthur Schomburg. This collector of books and manuscripts advised his audience to keep up the fight for Ethiopia and not to be discouraged by Italy's temporary victory. "It is our duty," Schomburg's message exhorted, "to hold the hand of Dr. Bayen in the work for Ethiopia, just as the hand of Moses was held up on the mountain top."²¹

The conspicuous presence of women in its ranks provided another factor for the rapid growth of the new organization. Mrs. Dorothy Bayen's involvement with the VOE seems to have popularized the movement's image among women, as can be judged by a good number of female contributors to her "Friends of Ethiopia" column. Similarly, Aida Bastian and Eudora Paris, both of them former immigrants to Ethiopia and now frequent speakers on EWF forums, helped attract a large female turnout.²²

Melaku's travels and public appearances in various states further promoted the new organization. Although the EWF never developed to be the mass movement its founder had envisaged, it was popular enough to have twenty-seven chapters, or locals, formed in several U.S. cities, in Central America, and in the Caribbean by 1940. There is not any estimation of the size of its membership, but tens of thousands of sympathizers may not be an exaggeration. For, only a few weeks after its creation, the EWF was able to send a petition with five thousand signatures to the League of Nations, demanding that Italy's conquest of Ethiopia be denied any form of legal recognition by the world community.²³

Although Melaku, in characteristic Ethiopian fashion, revealed little about his private life and inner feelings, he seems to have been soft-spoken and rather reclusive in his social life. The death of relatives and close friends during the war must have exacted a heavy emotional toll, compounded by a chronic sense of homesickness and cultural alienation. An Ethiopian couple, Lij Araya Abebe and his wife Assaguedetch, joined Melaku in New York in fall 1937, and one presumes the visit was in part to help alleviate the latter's wartime distress. Unfortunately, little is known about the nature of Melaku's relationship with his compatriots nor about his personal life in general, again giving the impression that he led a rather melancholic private life.²⁴

Lij Araya Abebe and the Federation

Lij (count) Araya Abebe, son of Abebe Ayele-Work, a cousin of Ras Makonnen, belonged to the progressive generation of the nobility that appreciated the importance of international ties. Araya made his international debut at the age of twenty-two as a member of the Ethiopian delegation that visited Japan in 1931. If he was recruited by Heruy Wolde-



Lij Araya Abebe, member of the Ethiopian delegation to Japan in 1931, antifascist agitator, and treasurer of the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc.

Selassie, foreign minister and head of the mission, in order to make a favorable impression on the host society because of his youth and good looks, the calculation was quite on the mark. Ethiopian royalty had a long history of using ethnic or regional intermarriage to seal blood ties, and Araya's betrothal to a Japanese countess no doubt emanated from a similar design. If Melaku's marriage to an American girl could usher a new era in intrarace relations, perhaps a love match between Araya Abebe and Masako Kuroda would also bring the royal houses of Ethiopia and Japan a step closer.²⁵

Of course, there are fundamental differences between the two incidents. While Melaku's exogamy was initiated by mutual love, Araya's engagement to Masako was brokered by government officials. In the

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latter's case, considering the two youths had little say in the matter, it came as no surprise that the arranged marriage never materialized. Still, the short-lived intercontinental melodrama not only marked the apex of prewar Ethiopian-Japanese relations, but it was also sensational enough to arouse the curiosity of the Western mass media.²⁶

Like Melaku, his senior by several years, Araya served in the ill-fated Northern campaign, in which tens of thousands of fighters perished, before joining the royal entourage bound for England. The fact that both Melaku and Araya shared a similar past may have been the reason for Araya's decision to move to New York. It is also possible that, since remittances from American supporters were far below expectations, the emperor may have wanted a second protégé to monitor the fundraising activities there.

Contemporary sources mention Araya's name only in passing. As for Assaguedetch, the first Ethiopian woman in the New World, it is more likely that she immediately went back to England since there were no more references to her in the American papers. While striving toward a common cause, Araya and Melaku also seem to have hardly shared a stage together. Given the social and economic stress of life in exile, it is not surprising if the two drifted apart as they competed for scarce resources and attention. Or, perhaps, Araya's significance in the EWF was simply overshadowed by Melaku's towering presence, while his apparent transient status in the country may have added to the circumscription of his activities. By those who knew him closely, however, the Lij is remembered for his active role in the EWF. He was for instance in charge of VOE's Amharic language lessons, which continued to appear weekly even after Melaku's death. He was also instrumental in the release and promotion of a propaganda film that showed the extent of Italian war atrocities in East Africa.²⁷

The Federation After Melaku

Unlike the campus-bound Ethiopians of the twenties and early thirties, Araya and Melaku stand out as the first among their countrymen to have had a genuine experience of what it meant to be black in America, in an era when Jim Crow was the de facto order of the day. Nevertheless, a social reconstruction of their fascinating overseas life remains difficult not only because of the lack of written sources but also because of Melaku's untimely death. In his 1939 booklet, *March of Black Men*, Melaku had declared, rather prophetically: "It is now plain to the world that Ethiopia shall not suffer very much longer. We will not only drive every Italian out of our country, we will also drive them out of every other part of Africa in the near future."²⁸ The Howard alumnus wrote these lines while in and out of hospital. He died of lobar pneumonia on 4 May 1940, almost exactly four years to the day he left Ethiopia, and only a year before the triumphant restoration of Ethiopian independence.²⁹

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"He has not died in vain," read a thoughtful obituary in *VOE*. "The work thus begun will never be ended until the black peoples all over the world are united for a free Ethiopia."³⁰ Those who sent their condolences to Mrs. Bayen, the bereft widow, included many individuals of national standing, among them, Dr. Numa P.G. Adams, dean of Howard University Medical School; Robert Montgomery, president of Muskingum College; J.A. Rogers, historian; Mary Church Terrell, the famous black suffragette; and A. Philip Randolph, leading civil rights activist and trade unionist.³¹

Although Melaku held no actual office at the time of his death, in his absence the EWF experienced some reshuffling. J. Finley Wilson succeeded Lorenzo King as president of the fledgling organization, with Matthew Gardener still as the vice president; while Araya, whose Amharic lessons continued to appear in the *Voice of Ethiopia*, held briefly the office of treasurer. Under Warren Harrigan's editorship, the weekly paper continued uninterrupted but with frequent complaints of declining subscription as well as unpaid subscription fees. Coverage of Ethiopian news fell drastically, World War II becoming the preoccupation of every print media, black or white. In September 1941, four months after the Ethiopian liberation, *VOE* ran its last weekly before ceasing publication altogether. Araya, the movement's last remaining link with the Ethiopian government, returned to Addis Ababa in 1943.³²

Despite a shared pan-African vision and commitment to the Ethiopian cause, the various EWF branches had emerged as grassroots movements without a coherent organizational structure. Devoid of a central leadership figure and without a rallying cause, these locals disbanded in the aftermath of Melaku's death. In larger cities such as New York and Chicago some branches continued to function actively, but with a much reduced membership. The Ethiopian government's allocation of land for EWF's settlement scheme in the mid-fifties somewhat revived the popularity of the movement but with a distorted effect. Intimately linked with a Jamaican-based messianic cause, the federation had by then lost its secular appeal, and the name EWF was henceforth incorporated by a Rastafarian sect of the same designation. In mainstream black America, the name Melaku was shoved into an obscure corner of history only to be venerated by the Rastafarians as a major prophetic figure of the century next to Bob Marley and Marcus Garvey.

Back in postwar Ethiopia, Araya, now married to his second wife Mulu-Emebet, held various portfolios including minister of Public Works and Communication, putting him in charge of major national projects such as road building, city planning and civil aviation. He continued to serve as their main liaison with the government for the small group of black Americans and West Indians who took up residence in the capital city, and was in part instrumental for the allocation of the settlement land outside Shashemene.³³

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Following the land nationalization decree by the Marxist junta in 1975, Araya's step sons, Merid and Mesfin Birru, mobilized a notorious antigovernment uprising in northern Shoa. The sons were killed in action by government forces, but Araya and his wife fled on foot to Kenya, after which they were resettled as refugees in the United States. Araya died in Washington, D.C., in May 2003 at the age of ninety-four. His funeral service was held in Addis Ababa at the Holy Trinity Church, where his body was put to rest.³⁴

Unlike Araya, who lived into his nineties despite a checkered yet versatile political career, Melaku's life was distinguished more for its depth than for its breadth. Still, difficulty in assessing Melaku's significance in Ethiopian history lies in the fact that his political activism encompassed a short life span. Even then, the spatial extent of his activity was confined to the New World, with marginal relevance to Ethiopian intellectual history. Moreover, in his political profile, Melaku had more in common with West African and West Indian nationalists than with the well-known Ethiopian wartime patriots. His matriculation at Howard University and his embrace of black nationalism placed him in the same camp with such pan-Africanists as Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore, both of them alumni of black institutions. Likewise, despite personal differences, Melaku had much in common with the renowned back-to-Africa advocate, Jamaica's Marcus Garvey. Reminiscent of Garvey's UNIA and his widely read newspaper, the *Negro World*, Melaku established the Ethiopian World Federation and the *Voice of Ethiopia*, through which he agitated for racial unity and African freedom.

Given his marginality to mainstream Ethiopian history, critics may dismiss Melaku as a mere deviant figure of no national import. Such thinking not only ignores the role of eccentric men and women in social movements, but it also fails to grasp the cumulative effect of individuals in any social transformation. Melaku is that rare individual of whose extraordinary experience is born a new chapter in history, in this case the chapter of Ethiopian-American race relations. Melaku's activity and writings should not be treated in isolation of contemporaneous developments however. A full appreciation of Melaku and his role as a conduit of pan-African consciousness should therefore consider the roles of other like-minded activists, among them Sylvia Pankhurst and Hakim Warqneh.

Sylvia Pankhurst and the Convergence of Gender and Race Politics

As mentioned earlier, Melaku had known Sylvia Pankhurst, editor of the *New Times and Ethiopian News* (NTEN) since his days in England in the summer of 1936. His correspondence with her from the United States, though intermittent, seemed warm and genuine. He regarded

her weekly newspaper as complementary to his own *Voice of Ethiopia* and even suggested that more efforts be made to increase its circulation in America.³⁵ Sylvia, as Miss Pankhurst was popularly known, reciprocated this feeling of cordiality and, on at least one occasion, published a short article about Melaku's U.S. activities in her *NTEN*.³⁶

From 1938 on however, communication between the two grew less frequent and more lukewarm. In one letter Sylvia complained about one of Melaku's associates who owed her money for the sale of her newspapers. Melaku apologized for the incident and promised to look into the matter.³⁷ Another incumbrance to the relationship was Melaku's establishment of the Ethiopian World Federation, a black nationalist organization, to which Sylvia as a white individual may not have felt welcomed. As a socialist-feminist radical, the Englishwoman must have found any brand of nationalism too sectarian, the antithesis to her universalist philosophy. This explains why Sylvia Pankhurst gave only token acknowledgement to Melaku's untimely death at the age of forty. Appearing in *NTEN* three weeks after the fact, Sylvia's obituary on Melaku was too brief and even then said little about the political legacy he left behind.³⁸

Ideological differences aside, Pankhurst and Bayen traversed similar paths as wartime propagandists and shared much in common in the way they affected postwar Ethiopian racial consciousness. Besides campaigning for the franchise of women, the cause for which she was best known, Sylvia Pankhurst spoke against fascism, Nazism, colonialism, and racism. Class and gender awareness at an early age shaped the suffragette's spirit of combativeness against oppression in general. She received her initiation into the world of radical politics through her father, Richard Pankhurst, a respected lawyer and advocate of the working class. Similarly, she drew her feminist inspiration from her mother Emmeline and older sister Christabel, both of them prominent figures in the women's movement.³⁹

Even by her family's standard, Sylvia was an anomaly. While Emmeline and Christabel called for a limited extension of political rights to women based on wealth and class status, Sylvia fought for universal adult suffrage.⁴⁰ Even more aberrational for someone of her generation, she rejected social Darwinism and its ascription to the theory of racial hierarchy. In 1912, while on a speaking tour of North America to advance the cause of women, Sylvia spoke at minority colleges in the South, undaunted by a hostile white reaction. Likewise, as the editor of the *Workers Dreadnought*, a socialist newspaper she founded, the suffragette maintained close contacts with black writers like Claude McKay as well as published articles condemning white supremacy rule in South Africa.⁴¹

Given her unconventional past, Sylvia constituted a tailor-made candidate for a leadership role in the antifascist struggle. When Mussolini's army invaded Ethiopia in the fall of 1935, she was among the first to condemn the war in a series of articles. "Is the conscience of Europe

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dead? Is there no honest thinking left in Britain?" she wondered, decrying Prime Minister Baldwin's policy of complacency.⁴²

Initially, Miss Pankhurst did not see Italy's aggression as a racial incident. Her antiwar protest was in fact more due to her opposition to fascism than her love for Ethiopia. Since Mussolini's grasp of power in the early twenties, she had condemned fascism and its glorification of war as a danger to peace and democracy, a setback to the revolutionary spirit of the time including the women's movement. Her hatred of fascism was also personal. Through her long-time companion Silvio Corio, an exiled Italian anarchosocialist, Sylvia knew personally Italy's leading opposition figures, many of whom were either jailed or assassinated by Mussolini's hit squads. Understandably, Sylvia abandoned her earlier conviction as a pacifist, arguing that fascism, and later Nazism, was an evil system that had to be crushed by all means possible.⁴³

Following her introduction to Haile Selassie in the summer of 1936, Pankhurst's position changed almost overnight from that of antifascist to that of pro-Ethiopian. The transition is not explained fully by her biographers, although one writer has insinuated a platonic love attachment to the emperor.⁴⁴ Whatever the reason for her transformation, Sylvia embarked on her new political course with characteristic finesse and tenacity. She campaigned for Ethiopia's liberation in almost stubborn, single-minded determination; lobbied for the reunification of Eritrea with Ethiopia; and later she joined the struggle for African independence from her newfound home in Addis Ababa.

As had been the case with her previous political engagements, Sylvia maintained a multifaceted approach to the Italo-Ethiopian war. Her *NTEN*, whose first issue appeared on 9 May 1936 was both internationalist and pan-Africanist on the one hand, and gender- and class-conscious on the other. First and foremost, the attack on Ethiopia was seen as creating an explosive racial powder keg in Africa, and *NTEN* regularly reported the anti-European anger that the war continued to fan. "The Italian aggression," observed one contributor, "has, in my opinion, very seriously hampered the relationship between black and white throughout all Africa, and has probably done more to encourage pan-African and antiwhite sentiment than any event in history."⁴⁵

Second, the Ethiopian tragedy was presented as part of the international crisis sweeping across Europe and Asia. In several issues of *NTEN*, Ethiopia, Spain, and China appeared side by side as victims of imperial aggression, and the plight of the masses in those countries was often compared with the plight of the Italian left, whose members Mussolini either exiled, jailed or murdered.⁴⁶

Third, as colonial subjects, the colored masses of Asia had much in common with Africans in their opposition to the war, and in several reports *NTEN* captured the anti-imperial emotional bonds that tied



Sylvia Pankhurst shaking hands with Jomo Kenyatta at the Abyssinia and Justice Conference, 9 September 1937

the two peoples together.⁴⁷ On 9 September 1937, for instance, Sylvia organized a meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster, whose attendees included Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, Ethiopia's Hakim Warqneh, Sierra Leone's Wallace-Johnson, Jamaica's Harold Moody, and India's Krishna Menon who brought with him a personal message from Jawaharlal Nehru, then president of the Indian National Congress.⁴⁸

Finally, the paper's unique feature was its gender dimension. There were regular references to the role of women in the pro-Ethiopian campaign,⁴⁹ as well as essays highlighting the role of Ethiopian female patriots in the underground resistance.⁵⁰ Attention was given similarly to the fate of colonial women as victims of double oppression, as in the case of the "870" Libyan women reportedly shipped to Ethiopia as high-class prostitutes.⁵¹

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In addition to presenting a kaleidoscopic picture of the war, Sylvia's weekly dealt with larger Afrocentric themes that were of special interest. It, for instance, reported the establishment of a commission of African education during the Seventh World Conference of the New Education Fellowship at Cheltenham, England. The paper quoted one of the African members of the commission as having argued that: "History books in Africa ought to be written by Africans and ought to aim at developing the 'national ego' of the African instead of dwelling on inter-tribal wars. Ancestor worship should be used as the basis for Christian teaching."⁵²

Given such pro-African and anticolonial stances, *NTEN* remained the most widely circulated pan-African paper of its time with a weekly dispatch of over ten thousand copies. In West Africa and in the West Indies particularly, where its essays were often reprinted in the local press for mass consumption, the paper enjoyed popular readership among the politically conscious.⁵³ With such far-reaching distribution and emphasis on larger continental themes, *NTEN* transcended colonial provincialism. For, however geographically dispersed, Africans could now read, write, and react to the same global issues that affected them as a people.

Illustrating this growing collective consciousness was a letter to Pankhurst by a West African student in England who wrote that "the young people of African descent feel that Italy has invaded our fatherland," adding that, "if it were not for your paper the young Africans would not know what is happening in Africa today, as the whole of the press in Europe has no room to publish the Ethiopian case." Letters of similar content were received by Sylvia from South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Jamaica, Guyana, Panama, and New York, to mention but just a few.⁵⁴

Naturally, colonial officials were the first to feel perturbed by *NTEN*'s belligerent tone and its wide circulation across Africa and the Caribbean. In Sierra Leone, where Sylvia's weekly was linked with the Youth League's anticolonial militancy, contents of the paper were deemed seditious enough to warrant a ban under the "undesirable literature bill." To the officials' chagrin, the proscription provided *NTEN* with more ammunition for its editorial crusade. Together with Harold Moody's LCP and other allies, Sylvia fought the ban tooth-and-nail. Her letters of protest to Malcolm MacDonald, the colonial secretary, exposed the arbitrariness of the unjust ordinance, putting the authorities in question on the defensive for several months.⁵⁵

In the mid-1950s there was a similar effort by the governor of Jamaica, Sir Hugh Foot, to suppress the publication of *NTEN*. In a letter of 10 September 1956, addressed to M. Phillips of the colonial office, the governor expressed a strong concern about the distribution of Sylvia's paper in Jamaica, supposedly because of its incendiary effect on the Rastafarians. The colonial office agreed about the inflammatory nature of

the paper, but desisted from taking any action against *NTEN* lest Sylvia publicized the affront and exploited it to her advantage. What Phillips and Foot did not know was that the debate over *NTEN* was a moot one by then, for, almost a year earlier, Sylvia had terminated her weekly and left for Ethiopia.⁵⁶

Sylvia Pankhurst and Hakim Warqneh

Understandably, Ethiopia was the country where the *NTEN* enjoyed the least circulation. Sylvia's paper had to be smuggled in through Djibouti or Sudan, and even then only a small number of Ethiopians were lettered enough in English to read it. Effort was made to have the paper available in Amharic; but by the few Amharic copies extant, the attempt at translation seems to have been a haphazard experiment.

On the other hand, Ethiopians in exile knew about the paper and some even contributed to its success. Such was the case with Hiwot Hidaru, a refugee in Khartoum, Sudan, who became Sylvia's reliable informant in the underground resistance. The relationship between the two began in 1938 when, after learning about Sylvia's activities in London through *NTEN*, Hiwot wrote a letter beseeching the suffragette's intercession for the release of his cousin from an internment camp in Kenya. With the latter's intervention the cousin was freed, but the communication between Sylvia and Hiwot would continue with Hiwot serving as *NTEN*'s news correspondent.⁵⁷

Among all Sylvia's Ethiopian friends and acquaintances, of particular significance was Dr. Charles C. Martin, better known by his countrymen as Azaj Hakim Warqneh Eshete. As discussed earlier, it was in response to Warqneh's advice that Melaku developed keen interest in pan-African politics. Warqneh's own association with Western blacks was neither copious, nor totally frivolous. His large household in prewar Ethiopia included Ada Bastian, black American, working as nanny to his four children. While heading the Ethiopian legation in London, he also employed Jamaican-born Una Marson as consular secretary. Class and age differences prevented the elderly Ethiopian from cultivating close personal ties with the young pan-Africanists in London, most of them recent immigrants. His Victorian upbringing in a British household may have also estranged him from the group culturally, for he was after all British by inclination and Ethiopian only by sentiment.⁵⁸

On the other hand, beneath the Victorian facade lay Martin's pan-African instinct, as can be seen by his voluntary embrace of Ethiopian citizenship or by his effort to open Ethiopia for black settlement. His pan-African stance would become even more apparent during the war years. The fascist aggression invoked in him a strong sense of nationalism

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that, when combined with his prolific penmanship, made him one of the country's most articulate critics of colonialism.

Of all the overseas-educated Ethiopians, Warqneh's life history stands out as the most unique. The unusual story goes back to the 1868 Makdala Expedition, the year that one of the Napier's officers found the three-year-old waif and decided to adopt him. Warqneh or Charles Martin grew up in Simla, India, where his adopted father, after whom he was named, was stationed. Trained in tropical medicine at Edinburgh, Martin served as a health officer in India, Burma, and on-and-off in Menilek's Ethiopia. From 1919 on he found permanent employment in Tefari's government, first as medical personnel, then as a provincial governor, and then as a diplomat in London during the war years.⁵⁹

Given Warqneh's intimacy with the Western culture, Tefari could not have made a more sound choice for the diplomatic post abroad. But Warqneh was also too stubborn to answer every royal beck-and-call, and the emperor would soon realize that his appointee was more of an independent actor than a supplicant courtier. The fact that Warqneh was adept at raising funds but poor in book-keeping only added to the friction, even though the collected money was used to help the many refugees the doctor had been supporting at his own expense. Only the subsequent transfer of Martin to India, in part for health reasons, would end the rivalry between the two, no doubt to the relief of both parties.⁶⁰

Personal differences did not affect Warqneh's role as a government spokesperson however. When Downing Street extended formal recognition to the Italian conquest in 1938, thereby terminating the official status of the Ethiopian legation, the doctor turned his house into a makeshift public office and kept it operational at great personal sacrifice. Already in his seventies, the Hakim carried out his political work diligently and was respected by white and black supporters alike. The IAFA activists, for example, looked up to him as a parental figure easy to work with. "But more valuable was the fact that we were welcomed and supported in every way by the Ethiopian Embassy in London," the Trinidadian C.L.R. James would recall. As the president of the IAFA, James visited the legation frequently, sometimes twice a day, and Warqneh was always there to receive him personally.⁶¹

Earlier on, not only did Warqneh facilitate Sylvia's introduction to Haile Selassie, he also remained her lifeline for news on Ethiopia. He himself wrote regularly for *NTEN* and in so doing gave the paper's pro-African image more authenticity. His earlier essays covered a wide range of topics. Some dealt with the issue of international peace and justice, some criticized the League of Nations for its impotency, some implored the public to continue its support for Ethiopia. Gradually, his writings became more militant and color conscious, especially after financial circumstances and ill health forced him to sell his house in England and to

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relocate to India, the country of his youth. The fact that Warqneh had been personally affected by the war, his two sons being among the thousands that perished in the Graziani massacre, no doubt contributed to the more aggressive tone of his subsequent penmanship.

One of his last essays from England discussed the European apathy toward "the poor old distant colored victims: the Chinese and Ethiopians."⁶² In another article he wrote from India, he deplored the lack of cooperation between Asians and Africans in the fight against "imperialism." Like Sylvia, Warqneh had been convinced by recent events that pacifism in the face of global evil encouraged more flagrant violations of international law. Out of this rose his opposition to Gandhian nonviolence, a "be slaughtered philosophy," as he dubbed it.

"This idealistic teaching may suit the irresponsible hermits who have nothing to gain or lose in this world," Warqneh lamented. "But from my own experience I have come to learn in this practical and realistic world of ours the policy of appeasement and weak submission to implacable violence is like courting pestilence, and is bound to lead to disaster in the end." The doctor concluded his essay with a strong denunciation of *Satyagraha* or passive resistance: "I therefore ... beg the misguided enthusiasts immediately to put a stop to this useless and unwise performance and to be manly and strong instead, in all their actions in support of what they honestly and rationally consider to be right and just."⁶³

Fortunately, Ethiopia's independence in May 1941 afforded the embittered old man an ideal place of retirement. In 1942, then in his late seventies, he once again relocated across a vast distance, this time to Addis Ababa. He lived there in a cozy family atmosphere accompanied by his children and grandchildren until his death on 9 October 1952.⁶⁴

Warqneh was not the only Ethiopian to situate the East African crisis in an international context. Abdisa Agga, a celebrated Ethiopian military hero, spent several years with the partisans of Yugoslavia after a daring escape from an Italian prison. Ashebir Gebre-Hiwot, the son of Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn, a well-known Ethiopian intellectual, was persuaded to quit his university studies in Switzerland to join first the patriotic resistance in Ethiopia and then the antifascist forces in Spain. It is not clear in which Spanish unit Ashebir enlisted, but with him were other Ethiopian students, one of them supposedly the son of Ras Imru, a prominent aristocrat and a leading patriot. "Madrid is not Addis Ababa," Imru's alleged son is to have said, explaining his reason for joining the antifascist struggle in Spain. "There we had nothing but our justified hatred. Here, we have guns, tanks and airplanes."⁶⁵

By themselves these were anecdotal examples of the most extraordinary. Nevertheless, such individual actions, together with Pankhurst's publications, heralded the beginning of a new era in which

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Ethiopians saw themselves not only as Africans but also as members of the oppressed peoples worldwide. The defiant spirits of Warqneh, Melaku, Abdisa, and Ashebir would shape and define the mood of the next generation of Ethiopian intellectuals, many of them to play a prominent role in setting the tone of Haile Selassie's anticolonial foreign policy.

Sylvia Pankhurst, Du Bois, and Ethiopian Sovereignty

Ethiopia was rendered a de facto British dependency following Italy's ejection from the Horn in 1941. Full restoration of Ethiopian political and territorial integrity therefore became Sylvia's new preoccupation. She campaigned unceasingly against the infamous 1942 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty that reduced Ethiopia to little more than a trusteeship. Together with the Ethiopian government's own diplomatic maneuvers, her campaign paid off with the signing of the second Anglo-Ethiopian treaty in 1944. Implicitly recognizing the sovereignty of the Solomonic throne, the second Anglo-Ethiopian treaty restored Addis Ababa's jurisdiction over the provinces except in the Ogaden, where the British presence would continue for another decade. By contrast, the future of the ex-Italian colony of Eritrea remained so fluid it served as the litmus test for the efficacy of the United Nations in handling colonial disputes.

Until the fifteenth century Eritrea had been an integral part of Ethiopia. Thereafter, the littoral province had suffered a series of foreign occupations: Turkish, Egyptian, and Italian. Of these, only the Italians extended their presence beyond the coastal lowlands and laid effective claim to the Eritrean hinterlands, which had hitherto remained well within Ethiopian political jurisdiction. Even though Britain administered Eritrea as a trusteeship following the collapse of Italian rule, the colony's fate still remained as ambiguous as ever. The considerations included: (I) remaining under British rule, (II) dividing the province between Sudan and Ethiopia, (III) federating Eritrea with Ethiopia, and (IV) authorizing Italy to reannex Eritrea.

Touting the Ethiopian government's line of argument, Miss Pankhurst lobbied for the reunification of Eritrea with Ethiopia. The region's intertwined cultural and political history, Ethiopia's need for an outlet to the sea, and the continuous influx of Eritreans to Ethiopia in search of full citizenship rights constituted the basis of her pro-unity conviction.⁶⁶

While the suffragette herself led the pro-unity agitation in Europe, she hoped her black American contacts would do the same in the New World. Aware of the postwar sympathy for Ethiopia among colored Americans, Sylvia began corresponding with W.E.B. Du Bois regarding the controversy over Eritrea: "I hope that you will see your way to agitate in America against the proposals of Mr. [James F.] Byrnes of placing the Ex-Italian Colonies under Trusteeship. This will really mean a new Colony for someone, probably Britain." Hoping to win Du Bois' support, she

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concluded her letter in a somewhat sentimental tone: "Ethiopia is going ahead well, and her progress will be a help to the whole of the coloured races. I do hope for your energetic support."⁶⁷

Du Bois' response to Sylvia's presumptuous request was equally noncommittal if abrasive. "I do not think that you or most English liberals have any clear idea of the status and effort of American Negroes." While agreeing that black Americans exercised some say in their government's attitude toward the colored republics, as in the case with Haiti or Liberia, Du Bois' response made it clear that American government had the habit of turning a deaf-ear to its black constituents, often regarding them as "busybodies."⁶⁸

Du Bois' response emphasized the need for continental and dispersed Africans to establish direct channels of communication instead of resorting to third parties, often a source of discord and misunderstanding. He observed that Ethiopians had long been led by their Western advisors to believe that "any appearance of sympathy between them and American Negroes would be unwise." What tied Ethiopia to New World blacks, Du Bois reasoned, was not just racial sentiments but also obvious political factors. "It is not simply a matter of common blood, which is certainly great between Ethiopia and us, but much more than that, it is a question of cultural status and sharing the same problems of oppression."⁶⁹

Regarding Sylvia's plea for joint political action on Ethiopia's behalf, Du Bois suggested, first, that efforts be made to create a more open and direct channel of communication between the races. "No one has appreciated more than I the long and courageous effort which you have made for the freedom of Ethiopia; but I strongly believe that you would be helped if your alliance with American Negroes and your understanding of their efforts were more complete." To that end, and as the first step toward launching an interracial political platform, the New Englander recommended convening a conference "between Americans of Negro descent, Africans, and their white friends."⁷⁰

Other than a brief encounter in Manchester during the 1945 pan-African conference, Du Bois and Pankhurst never met in person. They nonetheless continued their intermittent correspondence for more than a decade. Far from drawing the two together, the letters reveal extreme stubbornness and lack of flexibility.

In 1954 Du Bois wrote to Sylvia to see if she could make an arrangement for the emperor to meet with "American Negroes" during his upcoming visit to the United States.⁷¹ Although Sylvia warmed up to the idea, in her response she broke into a diatribe about her preference for the word *Afro-American* over the word *Negro*: "I think myself that Mr. [Edward] Lawson is not wrong in referring to the negroes of America as Afro-Americans, for I believe the term Negro can only apply to one-third of Africa and the Africans in America have come from many parts." Further exposing her

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naiveté on the matter, Sylvia repeated what had then become a common misnomer, namely that the Ethiopians were not Negroes and that they rejected any association with that label: "I think it wise to inform you that Ethiopia does not welcome the name Negro, not because she wishes to cast any slur on the Negro of America or of Africa, but because it does not seem to appear to be correct as applied to Ethiopia."⁷²

Even though the letter reflects certain outdated racial notions, Sylvia herself was not a bigot. In fact, her assertion was equally popular among many black intellectuals of her time. In the thirties and forties, French Caribbean and African writers had formulated the concept of *negritude*, which, rather than challenge conventional racial wisdom, encouraged blacks to take pride in values that were hitherto considered peculiarly African and inferior, and in so doing transformed the negative into a source of positive self-affirmation. The downside of *negritude* was that it gave credence to the Darwinian notion that distinct races held distinct characteristics, hence its short life as a genuine intellectual movement. To her credit, in Sylvia's writing no such racial characterization is evident. She recognized the use of the term Negro only for its physical and geographic connotations and nothing more. Even then, she challenged the applicability of that term to American blacks, since not all of them either originated in West Africa or bore physical resemblances to peoples of that region.

Du Bois made no effort to understand Sylvia's line of argument. He agreed the word Negro was not a logical term but had been so commonly used it had become conventional. "Hyphenated words like 'Afro-American' are awkward," he added.⁷³ Sylvia, always on the look out for new intellectual frontiers, may have welcomed the debate with Du Bois with characteristic enthusiasm. For his part Du Bois, contrary to his image as a great thinker, resorted to a generally defensive if not condescending tone. Just as Sylvia took the liberty of using the word Afro-American in her letter, Du Bois, who had always used the name Ethiopia in his prior correspondences, wrote back using the often deprecating name *Abyssinia* to refer to Ethiopia: "I am very grateful for your willingness to bring the existence of our fifteen million people to the attention of the emperor of Abyssinia."⁷⁴

In response to Du Bois' request, black America was included in Haile Selassie's 1954 travel plans. In addition to a visit to Howard University, where the emperor received an honorary doctoral degree, he attended Sunday service at the Harlem-based Abyssinian Baptist Church as well as visited Chicago's vibrant black community.⁷⁵

The Pankhurst-Du Bois communications also paved the way for the historic meeting between Ras Imru, the Ethiopian ambassador in Washington, D.C., and the Afro-American activist. The meeting, which took place in the Ethiopian embassy, was initiated by Imru, who may have

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taken his cue from Sylvia. In his invitation letter to Du Bois, the Ras stated that he wanted to “acquaint” himself with the “general condition” of African Americans and “to exchange views of mutual interest in cultural, historical, and other matters.”⁷⁶

However, the encounter between the two was more remarkable for the fact that it happened than for what it actually achieved in substance. As Du Bois’ follow-up letter indicates, the ambassador was interested in discussing domestic racial issues, while his counterpart was eager to explore the possibility of hosting a major pan-African conference in Ethiopia.

I had hoped to discuss with you ways in which two great branches of the black race, the 15 million people of your country and the 13 million Americans of Negro descent, might collaborate in the future for progress, survival, and cultural expansion. On the other hand, your chief interest was inquiry into the discrimination against people of color in the United States and what steps we were taking to eliminate it. You naturally assumed that we as Americans are at least in part responsible for our country’s failure to live up to its own laws and declarations and were curious to know my attitude toward discrimination. On the other hand, I assumed that you were more or less familiar with our long struggle for equality in this land and its results. We were, perhaps, both wrong in part. American Negroes are not responsible for discrimination in this land; they are the victims of it.⁷⁷

The ambassador, unversed as he was in the dynamics of African American history, might have entertained certain naive, even paternalistic notions toward occidental blacks; but no less surprisingly, Du Bois proved to be preoccupied more with abstract ideas than with finding common grounds. Imru had been in the United States for only two years, and his knowledge of American society outside diplomatic circles could only have been superficial. Similarly, other than a scholarly interest in the country, the founder of the NAACP had no firsthand knowledge of Ethiopians, of their culture and their social subtleties. Lacking in the Imru-Du Bois encounter was a Melaku-like interlocutor, one whose presence would have facilitated a healthy exchange of ideas. A potentially promising start in an intraracial dialogue thus came to an abortive end despite manifestations of good will on both sides.

Less explicit reasons may have also contributed to the premature conclusion of the above exchange. A week had barely lapsed following the Imru-Du Bois’ encounter when the Ras found himself the center of national attention. In a gathering at Constitution Hall in Washington, where President Truman was the scheduled speaker, the Ethiopian ambassador was escorted out of the diplomatic section by an unidentified security

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personnel. Despite an official apology by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the host of the event, the Jim Crow incident became sensational enough to have appeared in the *New York Times* the following morning.⁷⁸

The event itself may have been the making of a single trigger-happy guard, but given the ambassador's recent encounter with a well-known race ideologue and Communist sympathizer, the diplomat may have viewed the timing of the incident as more than a coincidence. He may have perceived it as either deliberate harassment by security agents or as a signal that his movements were being carefully monitored. Whatever the reason for the Constitution Hall fiasco, the Ethiopian official would henceforth be more wary in his involvement in U.S. domestic issues. In any case, Du Bois would later face censure by McCarthyites for his supposed membership in the Communist party, a fact that rendered further contact between him and the Ras ever more unlikely.

On the one hand, Pankhurst's and Imru's communications with Du Bois represented one more incomplete chapter in postwar Ethio-black American interactions. On the other hand, Du Bois' correspondences with the above individuals, however intermittent or short-lived, helped engage black American interest in Ethiopia. In an article Du Bois wrote in the late fifties, he described Haile Selassie's policy of postwar reconstruction in glowing terms. In pitting "the capitalist nations against each other," Haile Selassie tactfully kept Ethiopia outside the sphere of European influence. "The land is rich and plentiful," the New Englander observed, adding "There is no race nor color prejudice, and intermarriage is encouraged."⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Du Bois understood that Ethiopia's postwar progress rested entirely on one man's shoulders, which led him to ponder the country's political fate after the emperor's death. Would it be "a capitalist private profit regime, or an increasingly democratic socialism; or some form of communism?"⁸⁰ His uncertainty about Ethiopia's future in the postmonarchy era proved prophetic, even if the New Englander himself did not live long enough to witness it. Haile Selassie's ouster by a Marxist junta in 1974 plunged the country into a downhill spiral, a detriment from which Ethiopia would not recover for several decades.

Sylvia Pankhurst in Ethiopia

The Eritrean dilemma, the basis for Sylvia's initial contact with Du Bois, was finally resolved by the United Nations in 1950. The UN resolution backed by lengthy studies and fact-finding missions, recommended that Eritrea be reunited with Ethiopia under a federalist structure. According to the decision, Eritrea would retain an autonomous status with an independent parliament and judiciary, while defense, foreign affairs, and foreign trade would remain Addis Ababa's prerogatives.

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In 1952, in accordance with the aforementioned resolution, the era of British trusteeship ended, and Ethiopia annexed Eritrea under an arrangement that did not fully satisfy either party. While the Ethiopian government had lobbied for the unconditional return of Eritrea to Ethiopia, some Eritrean nationalists, mostly Muslims, had opted for separation in the hope of creating an independent Islamic state. Inspired by the politics of pan-Arab nationalism of the fifties, in 1958 some of these separatists fled to Egypt where they formed the Eritrean Liberation Movement. By 1961 the Eritrean Liberation Front was founded, and the armed struggle for independence begun. A year later, Haile Selassie unilaterally abrogated the federal arrangement and annex Eritrea as a province, a grave miscalculation, for the measure provided the political *raison d'être* of Eritrean nationalism.

Although the years from 1936 to 1941 represented the peak in *NTEN's* struggle against oppression, Sylvia's antifascist preoccupation was not confined to the war years alone. Having played an indispensable role in liberating Ethiopia from Italy and Eritrea from England, the renowned suffragette was equally vocal in the continentwide campaign against colonialism.

In the mid-1950s, Sylvia permanently relocated to Addis Ababa. Her monthly magazine, *Ethiopia Observer*, which soon began publication, often carried potent anticolonial articles, some of them deemed seditious elsewhere in the continent.⁸¹

In a decade when few Ethiopians traveled abroad or had access to the foreign press, Sylvia's magazine augmented the few locally published papers as a major source of African news. Almost every other issue of the *Observer* included coverage on Africa. One article discussed the racism that postwar Caribbean immigrants in Britain faced.⁸² Another issue bore impressionistic essays by several African students at UCAA. In some instances, whole issues were dedicated to particular topics of Sylvia's choosing. In 1958 Miss Pankhurst, together with her son Richard and his wife Rita, traveled to Kenya where they met the nationalist politician Tom Mboya, as well as visited Mau Mau detention camps. Their findings and observations provided material for the *Observer's* January 1959 issue, which presented an encyclopedic survey of contemporary Kenyan politics.⁸³ Similarly, Sylvia's posthumous publication of October 1960 focused entirely on the second "Conference of Independent African States," a testament to her growing preoccupation with larger continental issues.⁸⁴

The *Observer's* circulation outside Ethiopia is not clear, although it seems to have been distributed in parts of East Africa and possibly elsewhere on the continent through Sylvia's personal network. "I receive regularly and read Ethiopia Observer with interest," a letter from a certain

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Semakula Mulumba in Uganda stated, adding that the author thought of Haile Selassie as the embodiment of "African personality and dignity."⁸⁵

Writing in the wake of Nkrumah's rise to power, another contributor, a West African, expressed the euphoric sentiment shared across the continent as a result of Ghana's independence. "Oh, Ghana, what a joy thy liberty brings to the Black Man's heart, bruised by centuries of serfdom, injustice and wrongs committed in Africa in the form of cut-throat imperialism!" The essay resorted to a sweeping indictment of whites in Africa, but that did not bias Sylvia's editorial judgment. "Broken to pieces are to-day those ignominious fetters of slavery in Ghanaland, where White Men, paying hypocritical lip-service to Christ's principles, poached human beings as articles of trade."⁸⁶

As can be gathered from her obituary on Melaku in 1940, Sylvia started out as a critic of racial nationalism. Travels in Africa and a deeper involvement in African politics gradually softened her European-centered view of the world, and by the 1950s she had metamorphosed into an ardent advocate of African nationalism. Sylvia's unquestioned loyalty to the African cause in turn placed her within the inner circle of Haile Selassie's government. As Richard Pankhurst remarks, his mother often "wrote to Haile Selassie to tell him of African nationalist refugees, who had arrived in the country and were in need of assistance, or who might contribute to Ethiopian development, as teachers and the like."⁸⁷

Miss Pankhurst died in her Addis Ababa home on 27 September 1960, at the age of seventy-eight. The state funeral attended by the emperor and thousands of admirers, as well as the countless letters of condolences and tributes, several of them published in the subsequent issue of the *Observer*, affirmed the international respect the suffragette had garnered among Africans worldwide.⁸⁸

Sylvia's immediate legacies in Ethiopia included the establishing of the Princess Tsehai Hospital and the founding of social service agencies and women's associations. Her longterm impact lay in her literary contribution which helped bridge the psychological gap between Ethiopia and colonial Africa. Although primarily interested in Ethiopian affairs, *NTEN* and *Ethiopia Observer* carried news of wider continental relevance, often articulating common goals and aspirations. In reading these publications, other Africans felt ever drawn to Ethiopia, and Ethiopians themselves obtained a greater continental awareness. Sylvia and her writings not only pioneered a positive environment that made such mutual awareness possible, but they made it fashionable for the political and intellectual elite to associate itself ever more openly with pan-African causes in and outside Africa.

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6

ethiopia and the continent

Two actors of national import, the monarchy and the intelligentsia, dominated Ethiopian politics between 1941 and 1974. In the first two decades after liberation from Italy, Haile Selassie remained in the front seat of politics, praised by many as a harbinger of change. Although Tefari and the intellectuals, mostly university students, held diametrically opposed views on issues such as land and constitutional reforms, they converged in their attitudes toward pan-African politics. Unlike in Ghana, where Kwame Nkrumah was accused by his detractors of seeking continental glory at the expense of his country's coffers, few of the college radicals dared to challenge Haile Selassie on his pan-African track record. Continuity, therefore, summed up the central theme of Ethiopia's postwar ties with the rest of Africa.

Still, the imperial government was not immune to student criticism. In the postwar years, Haile Selassie's foreign policy would prove remarkable for its ability to strike a balance between courting the Western powers on the one hand, and forging close alliances with the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa on the other. Radical student ideologues regarded this policy of international rapprochement as a sign of unprincipled opportunism and, even if they found their government's African record imperturbable, often demanded that Ethiopia cut ties with the neocolonial West or do more to support the anticolonial struggles in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In other words, there were disagreements between the students and the government, but the differences said more about the idiosyncrasy of radical student politics than they did about an actual divergence in substance.

The British Interlude

More than any other contemporary documents, the second volume of Haile Selassie's autobiography captures best the overall anti-European feelings that the Italian invasion had stirred among Ethiopians. While exiled in England, the Lion of Judah dictated his memoir with self-conscious reservation, always employing the royal "We." However, there were moments during which he unveiled what must have been his innermost feelings. In one section, he recounted vividly what he



Haile Selassie and his advisers while in exile. Front row (left to right): Princess Tsehai, Miss Sylvia Pankhurst, Haile Selassie, Hakim Warqneh (Dr. Charles Martin), Crown Heir Asfaw Wossen; back row: Ato Lorenzo Tazaz and an unidentified person

thought was an unscrupulous British legal practice. Prior to the war, the Ethiopian government had purchased stocks in a British cable and wireless company. When the exiled king tried to cash some of the stocks, he was politely reminded that he no longer represented a sovereign government and therefore held no access to the investment. The court to which the monarch took the case accepted the company's line of argument and, to top it off, made the plaintiff liable for the latter's legal defense cost.¹ Despite feeling wronged and cheated by his European hosts, Tefari's resentment was tempered by his gratitude to England for serving as his safe haven during the war. The legal injustice, nonetheless, rendered the king's monetary standing ever so precarious that he nearly accepted a financial offer by none other than Italy in exchange for his official abdication from the throne.

In the last chapter of his memoir, completed several years after his return to Ethiopia, Haile Selassie is even less reserved in his remarks about his postwar relations with Downing Street. This is perhaps the most revealing part of the autobiography, as Tefari openly lashes out against British snobbery and racism. Contrary to what some writers have said

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about the emperor's personal arrogance, this section portrays a humble king who repeatedly identified himself and his countrymen with black Africa.

The ejection of Italy from Ethiopia in May 1941 heralded a triumphant end of the war as far as Ethiopians were concerned. At the same time, immediately following the fascists' departure, the Ethiopian government was faced with the painful reality of having to start from scratch. Under the fascist rule, Haile Selassie calculated, approximately 750,000 Ethiopians were killed; 14 million head of cattle slaughtered; 500,000 houses destroyed; 2000 churches ransacked; and 75 percent of the country's intelligentsia liquidated. For a country of barely 15 million, the crisis needed urgent national attention, but the ominous task of reconstruction was exacerbated by the British interlude.²

Having assisted in dislodging the Italians, British forces did not immediately leave Ethiopia. Rather, Ethiopia was seen as "occupied enemy territory" and placed under the control of the British East African Military Command with headquarters in Nairobi. Accordingly, whatever war booty the Italians left behind went to the British, even when the actual battlefield victory belonged to the Ethiopian patriots. In the western town of Jima, for example, where the patriots had driven out the fascists, the spoils fell to the British who, as it turned out, not only arrived at the scene late but also opened fire and wounded several Ethiopians. "The British," Haile Selassie lamented, "took all the military equipment captured in our country ... openly and boldly saying that it should not be left for the service of blacks."³

Although the extent of the British involvement with the Ethiopian government was defined more clearly under the 1942 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty, the relationship between the two countries was far from equal. If anything, the agreement proved Ethiopia's *de facto* colonial status, since it compromised Ethiopian sovereignty in exchange for British economic assistance. The judiciary, the police, and the military, as well as taxation and fiscal planning, were rendered British responsibility. In Eritrea and the Ogaden, likewise, the English controlled all the administrative apparatus, disavowing any jurisdictional claim by Addis Ababa.⁴

Emboldened by the 1942 agreement, British commanders remained antagonistic to Haile Selassie's nationalistic vision, often fabricating news of postwar anarchy and of ethnic unrest so as to justify continued British military presence.⁵ Some of these officers tried to exacerbate regional tensions by supporting antigovernment forces like the well-known fascist collaborator Haile Selassie Gugsä, whom they installed as the governor of Tigray. To Addis Ababa's relief, Gugsä's delusional politics would prove a liability to his benefactors. Gugsä was caught corresponding with Italian agents, even if the scandal only served to further demonstrate British hubris. Showing little sensitivity to the nationalists' demand

that the traitor be tried and brought to justice in an Ethiopian court, the unrepentant British chose to banish Gugsu first to Asmara and from there to the far off Seychelles.⁶

"In general, the British stopped at nothing to divide our people and make the government hated," the otherwise soft-spoken Tefari told his autobiographer. The British controlled the source of state revenue and taxation and, by imposing an austere fiscal policy on the government that made the payment of salaries almost impossible, tried to sow seeds of discontent among the civil servants.⁷ "We began to hear that some of our people were saying that we drove out one white man only to replace him with another," Haile Selassie remarked, adding: "As they said on the street, if this was the result of everything, then what was wrong with the Italians?"⁸

Nationalistic pressures from Addis Ababa, together with Sylvia Pankhurst's London-based pro-Ethiopian lobby, facilitated the signing of the second Anglo-Ethiopian accord in 1944. The agreement restored Addis Ababa's political and territorial sovereignty in all the provinces outside Eritrea and the Haud, a district in Ogaden that the British refused to relinquish for another decade because of its water wells. The 1944 treaty ended English suzerainty over Ethiopia. The closure of that ignominious chapter, although long overdue from an Ethiopian vantage point, meant the pursuit of a more versatile foreign policy. To that effect, Haile Selassie revived the pre-war ties with the United States and the European powers, while investing ample resources in cultivating close friendships with third world countries. The result of such aggressive self-projection in international politics was that, from Bandung to Accra, from Geneva to New York, Ethiopia was represented by seasoned diplomats whose views on African issues were closely watched and heeded. "Ethiopia, in so many ways the least African of the African states," would thus become "the major spokesman for Africa," in the words of one observer.⁹

Ethiopia and Africa in the 1950s

Ethiopia's identification with colonial Africa began in earnest as a result of the 1935-1941 war. Haile Selassie's strong belief in collective security complemented this newly awakened continental consciousness. From personal experience in the mid-1930s, Tefari well understood the precariousness of Ethiopian independence as long as the entire continent was not free, hence his embrace of the African freedom struggles.

Peter Schwab, a British scholar, has argued that Haile Selassie's interest in African politics emanated from his fixation on personal glory. Central to Haile Selassie's megalomaniacal personality was a sense of insecurity and fear of being dominated by younger and better-educated continental rivals like Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure. Ambition for international recognition and a selfish pursuit of power was, according to the Marxist

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Schwab, what drove the aging emperor to put his full diplomatic weight behind the politics of pan-Africanism.¹⁰

Schwab is one of the few Western scholars to write favorably of the Derg's experiment with socialism in the seventies and eighties, even though the tragic effects of the red terror and famine indicate otherwise to any detached student of this period. The basis for Schwab's negative characterization of Haile Selassie is therefore more ideological than factual. After all, the argument about "hidden personal motives" is as readily applicable to Nkrumah as it is to Haile Selassie. True, the pan-African politics of the late fifties was as much a contest of personalities as of ideas, and the search for fame and power was an important consideration for the parties involved. But politics by its very nature is about competition and rivalry, thriving on the need for recognition and influence, and the emperor's conduct in this respect was neither unusual nor unduly selfish.

Schwab's argument that Haile Selassie's involvement in African issues was initiated by a purely ulterior motive, likewise, belies the multifaceted interaction between Ethiopia and the rest of Africa in the fifties and the sixties. Far from being one-man's strive toward continental ascendancy, the policy of Africanization characterized the Ethiopian state of mind both at institutional and intellectual levels. While the monarchy as an institution no doubt held a central place in every aspect of Ethiopian political life, the lavish attention bestowed on Haile Selassie's personal diplomacy has often overshadowed the roles played by minor officials. The architects behind Haile Selassie's Africa policy were seasoned diplomats of humble origin, among them Foreign Minister Ketema Yifru, UN Ambassador Haddis Alemayehu, and pan-African sports official Yidnekachew Tesemma. Such luminaries were instrumental in defining their government's international persona and would as such be remembered by future generations for putting Ethiopia on the political map of the world.¹¹

Although a talented artist, it was through his role as a diplomat rather than as a writer that Haddis Alemayehu helped shape Ethiopia's postwar political image. According to Reidulf Molvaer, one foreign policy change attributed to Haddis in the 1950s was the adoption of a strong antiapartheid stance by the Ethiopian government. Because of Jan Smuts' purported sympathy for Ethiopia during the war, and because of the deployment of South African troops in the antifascist military operation in northeast Africa, Haile Selassie had entertained a noblesse oblige attitude toward the Afrikaner government. That policy changed while Haddis was serving as his country's representative to the United Nations, and Ethiopia henceforth became a leading critic of the racist regime.¹²

Haddis, who as a soldier had witnessed Italy's use of mustard gas and other weapons of indiscriminate killing, spearheaded a campaign to stop French nuclear testing in the Sahara. He introduced in the UN general

assembly a resolution that put freeze on further production of nuclear weapons. The resolution, although well-received, failed ratification because of its unpalatability to the great powers. It nonetheless lent momentum to the international campaign against the spread of nuclear weapons, in particular to the 1961 Irish proposal, which was subsequently signed by most countries and became the basis of present-day nuclear nonproliferation.¹³

Haddis' pan-African example was picked up by younger protégés, among them Yidnekachew Tesemma, a champion of intercontinental sports. One of the founding players of the St. Giorgis, Ethiopia's oldest soccer club, Yidnekachew negotiated his country's admission into the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) in 1953. In 1957, he attended the formation of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in Khartoum and, four years later, was chosen as its vice president, a post he shared with the Ghanaian Ohene Djan. In 1971, he replaced the Egyptian Abdel Aziz Salem as the organization's president, a position he held until his death in August 1987.¹⁴

During his long tenure, Yidnekachew gained respect for his administrative efficiency, and for making CAF both profitable and self-reliant. He was equally admired for his combative stance against racism in sports. South Africa had been represented at the first CAF conference in Khartoum but then withdrew when confronted by the antiapartheid lobby Yidnekachew organized. Eventually, in the aftermath of the 1961 Sharpsville massacre, CAF would impose an official boycott on South Africa. Apartheid surfaced again as a controversial sports topic in reaction to the International Olympics Committee (IOC) invitation to South Africa to the 1968 Olympic games in Mexico. Yidnekachew's call for an international boycott of the games to protest Pretoria's inclusion held sway on several countries, the result being the isolation of South Africa from international sports including the olympics.¹⁵

If Haddis and Yidnekachew embodied the Africa-oriented intelligentsia of their generation, a similar diplomatic trend was equally apparent at the institutional level. In November 1960 Ethiopia and Liberia, Africa's only signatories to the League of Nations, took South Africa to the Hague-based International Court of Justice over the status of Namibia. The German colony had been entrusted as a mandate administration to South Africa by the League of Nations after the First World War. Ethiopia and Liberia, backed by the newly independent states, argued that South Africa had illegally overextended the trusteeship terms and turned Namibia into a colony. The plaintiffs demanded that Namibia's administration be turned over to the United Nations, the League's successor; but Verwoerd's government shrugged off the proposal, denying any legal link between the two international bodies. On 18 July 1966, after six years of litigation, the court dropped the Southwest African case on technical grounds;

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but the effort, nonetheless, underscored Ethiopia's commitment to the liberation struggle.¹⁶

Ethiopia's contribution to the antiapartheid cause included extending military training to the African National Congress (ANC). "Our programme was strenuous," Nelson Mandela recalled his two-month military drill in the outskirts of Addis Ababa in 1962. "We trained from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m., broke for a shower and lunch, and then again from 2 to 4 p.m." Mandela's group practiced target shooting, concocted explosives, demolished mines, and learned a range of other insurgency techniques. "I felt myself being moulded into a soldier and began to think as a soldier thinks--a far cry from the way a politician thinks."¹⁷

Offering military training to the ANC was a relatively safe venture given Ethiopia's physical distance from South Africa. By contrast, the presence of a small band of Kenyan independent fighters on the Ethiopian soil would remain a thorny issue between Addis Ababa and London. The Land and Freedom Army, better known as Mau Mau, emerged in 1952 among the Kikuyus of Central Kenya, where African land dispossession was felt most keenly. Adept in the classic guerilla tactic of hit-and-run, the movement soon grew in popularity, relying on countless local sympathizers who provided intelligence and material support. Although Mau Mau targeted primarily colonial collaborators and informants, its shadowy presence, together with the purported image of its fighters as fierce and ruthless, struck terror at the heart of the settler community.

The British responded by incarcerating, often with little or no incriminating evidence, suspected Mau Mau sympathizers, among them the foreign-educated Jomo Kenyatta, whom they had described as "a leader to darkness and death." More than the arrest of individuals however, it was the government's resort to brutal counter-insurgency measures, such as civilian internment into concentration camps and heavy aerial bombardment of suspected guerilla hideouts, that finally contained the insurrection that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Kenyans and scores of Europeans.

Dwindling morale and logistics also split the Mau Mau leadership. While Dedan Kimathi and his followers continued to frustrate British forces from their stronghold in the Aberdares, a group of over seventy men led by Stanley Mathenge, Kimathi's second in command, left for the frontier district in the north where they expected a nominal British presence. The march north would take its toll as food and water shortages led to defection or death. By the time sheer survival instincts led the remaining strugglers across the border into Ethiopia, their number had been reduced to a ragtag band of two-and-half-dozen men at best.¹⁸

The media in Western Europe and North America had followed its British counterparts in maligning Mau Mau as a reactionary force set on mayhem and murder. If one follows Schwab's aforementioned argument,

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Haile Selassie's personal interest would have been best served, at least at the international level, by rounding up of Mathenge's band of "terrorists" and turning them over to Kenyan authorities. But as it turned out, Ethiopia's commitment to the anticolonial cause overrode the emperor's overseas stakes, and the ex-fighters were discreetly resettled in Ethiopia as civilians.¹⁹

In February 1957 Kimathi was captured and hanged in Nairobi, his death emblematic of the movement's final demise. Rumors about his flight to Ethiopia notwithstanding, Mathenge too was presumed dead by his contemporaries. In a series of newspaper articles In January 2002, Kenyan journalist Joseph Karimi claimed to have traced Mathenge's whereabouts to the outskirts of the Ethiopian capital. When a supposed picture of the missing general, then in his early eighties, appeared in the *Kenyan Standard* of 20 January, the old man was catapulted overnight from oblivion to national celebrity. Karimi's articles showed a man fluent in the Amharic language and a devout practitioner of Orthodox Christianity, implying assimilation. The journalist found Mathenge (now Lemma Ayana) leading an idyllic life with a large family, land, and cattle galore. Kenyans' excitement over Karimi's breathtaking discovery gradually wore off however, as subsequent articles raised more questions than answers. One article, for instance, described the eighty-year-old man who, despite a bullet-injured leg and a stiff back, continued to till the land and tend to his cattle. Another article mentioned of Lemma's favorite tactic of playing mum whenever the issue of his return to Kenya as a national hero came up. The fact that Lemma Ayana never uttered a Kikuyu or Kiswahili word, not even when his Kenyan ex-wife reportedly flew to Addis Ababa to meet him, made it equally difficult to believe that this was indeed the fabled guerilla fighter.²⁰

Despite several discrepancies in the story, the perceived legend was flown to Kenya, accompanied by his Ethiopian wife and their two children, for one-month visit as the government's special guest. Initially, the party was received with pomp and ceremony by hundreds of enthusiasts at the airport. But as the public gradually took note of the series of inconsistencies in the whole drama, a moment of elation turned into a fury against a government that could not even distinguish one of its national icons from a foreign-born peasant farmer. After a week of confusion, Lemma Ayana and his family were whisked out of their four-star hotel by government security and deported back to Addis Ababa with little fanfare.²¹

Whether the Mathenge scandal resulted from a contrived journalistic scheme, or was a genuine case of mistaken identity by a society longing for a messianic hero, is not clear. Whatever the explanation for the farcical saga, Karimi's coverage of the purported ex-Mau Mau hero brought to light a neglected aspect of the Ethiopian past. It reenacted Ethiopia's



The purported Gen. Stanley Mathenge and his Ethiopian family arrive at the Jomo Kenyatta international airport as official guests of the Kenyan government

role in the anticolonial struggle of the fifties which, inter alia, included provisions of material support and safe refuge to black freedom fighters.

Ethiopian institutional involvement with Africa encompassed a wider scope than the aforementioned examples. In the socioeconomic arena, Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) stood out for its pioneering role in African air travel. Besides being less developed, air travel in colonial Africa was long and expensive, since it often involved a circuitous flight via Europe. By 1960-61 EAL had procured landing rights in the strategically situated African capitals, from Nairobi in the east to Monrovia in the west, becoming the first trans-African carrier with direct flight schedules between the two extremities. As its own publication put it, the EAL was now to Africa what the trans-Siberian railroad had been to Russia more than half a century earlier.²²

If the airline industry symbolized Ethiopia's lead in transportation technology, the establishment of the Haile Selassie I Prize Trust reflected the government's self-perception as the intellectual torch bearer of a new Africa. Modeled after the Nobel Prize Foundation, the Trust sought the "strengthening of the spiritual and cultural bonds between the Ethiopian people and the peoples of the African continent and the whole world." From 1963 on until its dismantling in 1974, the Trust dispensed fifty awards, nineteen of them to non-Ethiopians, in the fine arts and in the sciences. Winners of the African Research Award, the most prestigious prize, fetching a sum of 70,000 birr, included the Howard University professor of history, William Leo Hansberry; the British Africanist, Basil Davidson; and the Senegalese poet laureate, President Leopold Sedar Senghor.²³

The Road to OAU

Ethiopia's lasting imprints on Africa lay in the political arena, for, beyond any other factor, Haile Selassie's personal mystique as Africa's elder statesman was responsible for creating the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The drive for African unity picked up steam after the independence of Ghana in 1957. In April 1958, Ghana's prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, convened in his capital Accra the first conference of "All Independent African States," to which Ethiopia was represented by Haile Selassie's youngest son, Prince Sahle Selassie. Whereas Guinea and Egypt sided with Ghana in calling for the immediate integration of Africa, Ethiopia and Liberia adopted a more cautious position. In fact, Ethiopia's message to the conference mentioned only the need for peace, collective security, and unity of purpose.²⁴

By the time Ethiopia played host to the Second Conference of the Independent States in June 1960, competing visions of pan-Africanism had emerged. Nkrumah, a unificationist, insisted that Africans should first seek the "political kingdom" as the prerequisite to economic progress. His opponents, the cooperationists, associated integration with the loss of sovereignty and spoke in vague terms about the need for some type of loose or nonbinding federation. Haile Selassie, a gradualist, espoused an intermediate position and saw economic cooperation as the necessary step before the dissolution of boundaries. He called for the opening of transnational roads and for the merging of Africa's international air services, as well as for the adoption of a continental banking system, and for the introduction of cultural and educational exchange programs. Without such fundamental economic restructuring, he argued, political independence was nothing less than a camouflage behind which the former colonial powers continued to exploit Africa.²⁵

The 1960 pan-African conference in the Ethiopian capital coincided with the eruption of civil war in central Africa. Congo had gained



Haile Selassie settling differences between the Sudanese government and the rebel Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA)

independence from Belgium in June 1960. What began as a Congolese army revolt against its Belgian officers during the independence euphoria had, in a few months, escalated into a national civil war. There were three major rival factions involved. Supported by Belgian and South African mercenaries, Moïse Tshombé waged a war of secession in the mineral-rich southeastern province of Katanga. While paying lip service to national unity, Patrice Lumumba and Joseph Kasavubu, prime minister and president respectively, each continued to consolidate his power base along ethnic and regional lines. Subsequent intervention by an African coalition force under UN auspices could neither contain the civil war nor ensure the personal safety of the prime minister.²⁶

A unificationist and an advocate of a centralized Congo state, Lumumba had emerged as the embodiment of Congolese nationalism in the eyes of many Africans. His death at the hands of CIA-backed opposition forces in January 1961 caused an irreversible split between the integrationists and the cooperationists. After watching the Congo fiasco, the former became keenly aware of Africa's vulnerability to foreign manipulation and accelerated the call for unity. The cooperationists, most of them French-speaking, continued to support Kasavubu and his vision of a loosely federated Congolese state. To show solidarity with Kasavubu and among themselves, they met at Brazzaville in December 1960, where they vowed to cooperate with each other but without the

unnecessary sacrifice of political sovereignty. In a subsequent conference in the Liberian capital, their conservative cause found more adherents, hence the Monrovia group. In parallel developments, the governments of Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Egypt, and Morocco, all supporters of the deceased Lumumba and advocates of unification, formed the Casablanca Group, named after the North African city where their leaders gathered.²⁷

When Nigeria hosted the third all-African conference in January 1962, the unificationists boycotted the meeting because of Nigeria's active membership in the Monrovia club. While attending the tension-ridden Lagos conference, Haile Selassie explained that his country belonged to neither the Monrovia nor the Casablanca camp. Ethiopia belonged to one group only, "the African group." In Lagos, the emperor embraced the concept of a singular African state, but with a major qualifier. Unlike Nkrumah, who insisted on unconditional and immediate dismantling of the colonial boundaries, Haile Selassie regarded unification as a gradual process. His Lagos proposal specifically called for the creation of a supranational political body that would pave the way toward complete unity in a step-by-step process. Because of the absence of the Casablanca states, a detailed discussion on the Ethiopian motion was postponed until the Addis Ababa conference the following year.²⁸

As home to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Addis Ababa had situated itself as a neutral city, making it possible for both camps to attend. Unlike the earlier conferences that pitted one group against another, dialogue and compromise characterized the spirit of the May 1963 summit, turning it into one of the most fruitful ventures in the whole history of pan-Africanism.²⁹

In his opening address, Haile Selassie spoke of unification as an evolutionary process, since existing political and ideological differences impeded immediate political transformation. He then unfolded a modified draft of his Lagos proposal, which called for the creation of the Organization of African Unity. He explained that the new organization would, among other things, pave the way for a political integration aided by such transnational institutions as the "African university" and the "African development bank." The emperor also suggested forming an African defense pact for mutual protection against foreign aggression. His draft did not fully satisfy either camp, and some of his points, like the joint defense force, were dismissed as too ambitious. The document was, nonetheless, regarded as the final synthesis of ideas and a logical compromise, hence its unanimous approval and the birth of the OAU.³⁰

By the mid-1960s, the Africanization of Ethiopian political consciousness had reached full maturity. As compliment for his adept diplomacy in bringing the continent together, Haile Selassie was voted as the first chair of the OAU and Addis Ababa as the seat of its permanent headquarters. Haile Selassie would continue to command the continent's attention for

the next several years, his successful mediation of the Algeria-Morocco border conflict in 1965 marking the climax of his continental stature.

The Student Movement

A major indicator in the postwar Ethiopian modernization process lay in the area of education. Menilek had founded the first Western-type secular school as well as introduced the practice of sending bright youths abroad for modern studies. Under Haile Selassie the tradition grew by leaps and bounds. According to a study by Randi Balsvik, before 1935 about 200 Ethiopians were trained at overseas educational centers. During the five-year Italian occupation period, the number of Ethiopians studying abroad fell to zero. In the postliberation years, there was a drastic hike in college education, and in the first two decades alone about 550 Ethiopians had returned from higher studies abroad.³¹

Since Ethiopia was an agrarian society with limited need for skilled or semi-skilled labor, universal primary education did not top the emperor's priority list. In order to match his government's top-down developmental pursuit, the educational system was expectedly geared toward the creation of an intellectual elite: "the talented tenth," as the American educator Du Bois would have put it. The University College of Addis Ababa, UCAA, began operation in December 1950 with 25 students and 9 staff members, mainly French-Canadian Jesuits. More colleges followed in and outside Addis Ababa for specialties like agriculture, construction and medicine. In 1961, University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) and the other colleges joined together to form the Haile Selassie I University (HSIU) with the combined student body numbering just a little under one thousand.³²

Since the national university was expected to enhance the emperor's self-perception as a pioneer in modern education, vast resources were invested in it with the hope of turning it into an intellectual lighthouse for the entire continent. Among the beneficiaries of the new facility were, in this regard, a number of African students, supported by Haile Selassie I scholarship fund. The program became real in fall 1959, with the arrival of the first batch of students at UCAA, about thirty in all.

The students, most of them East Africans, were asked to write short autobiographical sketches for the April 1959 issue of the *Ethiopian Observer*. Their essays indicated that, despite the initial difficulties they encountered in their respective countries while going through the colonial red tape for exit visas and passports, they were well received once in Ethiopia. "We therefore feel we owe much to Ethiopia, for education alone will enable us to attain a position in this age of progress," wrote a Kenyan student.³³ "Ethiopian hospitality, long as I have enjoyed it, still leaves me breathless," remarked another matriculant from Ghana, who added: "The lavishness with which a busy man will give up precious time to receive

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and entertain a stranger, to whom he is in no way bound, remains for me one of the wonders of Africa.”³⁴

The foreign students as a whole retained an active social life: from regularly contributing essays to student publications, to running for offices in the various student bodies, to dominating the Debating Society because of better proficiency in the English language. After graduation, some of these students went on to play prominent political roles in their respective countries. Robert Ouko, president of the Kenyan Student Association at UCAA in the early sixties, would later rise to the rank of foreign minister, a position that unfortunately pitted him against powerful enemies and led to his assassination in the late eighties. One of Ouko’s Tanganyikan contemporaries on campus, George S. Magombe, headed the OAU Liberation Committee following his graduation with a degree in economics; while Sam Njoma, another alumni of the same institution, led the Southwest African Peoples’ Organization (SWAPO), becoming Namibia’s first president after independence.³⁵

Even if national prestige had been the unspoken rationale for providing the scholarships, the program exemplified a more practical and down-to-earth approach to pan-Africanism. “The African people cannot come to know and understand one another simply through the use of maps,” the emperor told the first group of foreign matriculants. Continental solidarity had to be promoted through academic and cultural exchange programs. “We shall not fail to send Ethiopian students to schools in other parts of Africa,” the monarch promised, “so that the program of cultural and educational exchange, which We have initiated, will extend yet more widely.”³⁶

The presence of the scholarship students at UCAA facilitated a more cosmopolitan intellectual atmosphere. Through their interaction with the foreign matriculants, Ethiopian students could now see past their national blinkers and appreciate the transcending political and socioeconomic forces. Such was their earnest conviction in pan-Africanism many of them found Nkrumah’s gospel of immediate unification more appealing than Haile Selassie’s position on gradualism.

Illustrative of this was the campus publication *News and Views* (NV), whose role as a mouthpiece of pan-African radicalism remained unsurpassed. The NV editorial board comprised Ethiopian as well as foreign students, and its pool of contributors was equally diverse. Recurrent weekly topics included themes such as the African personality, African unity, the Congo crisis, South Africa, Rhodesia, and, to a certain extent, U.S. foreign policy and Vietnam.

The essays that appeared in NV in the period between the late fifties and early sixties mirrored the generation’s sense of optimism. “Africans are beginning to talk of the African personality,” wrote a certain Tamiru Gobana. “We cannot but wonder whether this new personality is not

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going to assert itself at the forum of world debate with a new form of ideology. The existing ideologies have recently tried to win over this new individual, but its personality proved so independent that it asserted itself with a glaring defiance of present ideologies.”³⁷

In a similar article, “Pan-Africanism or Balkanization,” Neway Christos reflected a prevailing political view: “The days when one was led to think of pan-Africanism with an air of idealism have passed.” Pan-Africanism, according to Neway, was no longer a mere appraisal of the cultural and historic similarities that tie Africans together as one people. Political expediency and economic necessity dictated that the cause of unity be more practical. The mechanisms for African unity may not have been adequately defined by the interested parties. “Yet, these and other inconveniences which surround the concept of African solidarity should not be the cause of despair but rather an impetus for a realistic assessment of the present and the future.”³⁸

During the peak of the civil war in central Africa, NV was quick to gauge the campuswide reaction following the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese prime minister. The students were “shocked” by the nationalist’s premature death, the editorial for 16 February 1961 read. “In evidence of their feeling, they stood in silence for about five minutes as a tribute to the Congolese leader.” Having described Lumumba’s death as “regrettable,” the paper predicted that “his name will stand out as one of the great nationalists in the annals of African history.”³⁹

Given the political bankruptcy of the newly independent African governments, it was not long before the euphoric mood of the early sixties gradually turned into sour disenchantment, and the discourse on pan-Africanism metamorphosed from celebratory praise to inflammatory rhetoric. The transition was not an overnight affair however. Since the late fifties signs of antimonarchical defiance were apparent among Ethiopian student activists. Having openly supported the 1960 coup plot, the students had to march to the emperor’s palace to beg for pardon before they were readmitted by the university. The friction between the collegians on the one hand and the campus authority and the palace on the other continued latently until it openly exploded in the late sixties, becoming a factor in the subsequent overthrow of Haile Selassie.⁴⁰

The American Factor

Although American presence in Ethiopia dated to the establishment of the U.S. military base in Asmara in 1953, the number of American civilians in Ethiopia remained then relatively negligible. They seemed more self-conscious than their future compatriots because of the negative publicity their country received as a result of the civil rights movement. The half-apologetic and half-bashful behavior of American officials in Addis Ababa

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in the fifties can be illustrated by a propaganda pamphlet distributed by the United States' Information Service.

Written both in Amharic and in English, the publication tried to preempt any anti-American sentiments by drawing a positive picture about American race relations. While highlighting major African American political achievements since the American war of independence, the tract deliberately told little about the history of American racial injustice both before and after emancipation. By comparing antebellum slavery with European feudalism, the pamphlet tried to portray humanely the relationship between black slaves and their white slavemasters. "Just as in feudal European society, the white master had a definite obligation toward his slaves. He protected them in any difficulties, saw that they received considerate treatment from their overseers, and in general looked after their well-being. They were given cabins that were in no way inferior to those that housed the landless whites."⁴¹

At governmental level, U.S.-Ethiopian relations grew stronger in the sixties with the arrival of hundreds of American Peace Corps volunteers and other civilian personnel. While the former were stationed mostly in villages and rural towns, the latter constituted a good portion of the HSIU faculty and administration staff, including the vice president's office. The tension between American cultural ascendancy and Ethiopian nationalistic pride sowed the seed for anti-Westernism, as real or perceived U.S. influence became an ideal reference point around which student radicalism began to coalesce. Words such as "cultural imperialism" and "yankee go home" became a familiar jargon in campus circles, while Marxist concepts such as dependency, underdevelopment, and neocolonialism gained wide currency in debating societies and group discussions.⁴²

The mysterious assassination of President John F. Kennedy, perceived by many as a genuine civil rights reformer and a champion for the underdog, only reinforced the students' mistrust of the super power. The Kennedy tragedy was seen as a major setback to the struggle for racial equality in America and the process of political decolonization in Africa. The student poet, Abebe Worke, thus expressed the grief felt by his peers as a result of the President's death:

Wake up to see your America Abraham Lincoln
What a backwardly moving nation it has become,
Alas America- I woe thee, pity- pitiable.
What a Civilization! What progress.
Africa for Kennedy it weeps
and at thee America it laughs
As each and every Colored in thee does.⁴³

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In 1964, American motives toward Africa became suspect once again with the arrival of U.S. and Belgian troops in the Congo. Western intervention in the central African civil war, only to result in the indiscriminate killing of Africans in order to save white lives, aroused angry responses. "To say that Americans are humanitarian is delusory," excoriated Asmerom Kidane, a second year economic student. "Had Americans been humanitarians, they would have protected the rights of many Afro-Americans who are being continuously bombed, hanged, and murdered." Asmerom suggested that Africans be allowed to solve their problems without foreign interferences. "Africa should be for Africans, and Congo must not be another South Vietnam."⁴⁴

The central African crisis prompted the HSIU Students Council to dispatch protest letters to President Lyndon Johnson and Belgium's foreign minister. "From then on," wrote Balsvik, "the United States was put in the imperialist category. Its intentions in Africa were seriously questioned and African leaders were seen as accomplices of the imperialists: their stooges."⁴⁵

Student anti-American sentiment rose to a crescendo during the infamous fashion show of spring 1968. Organized by a female Peace Corps volunteer, the women's fashion show was meant to attract mostly members of the expatriate community, the primary aim being to raise funds to renovate the women's dormitory. Campus girls were to appear in front of a mostly Western audience in latest European designs, including the provocative miniskirt, a daring rebellion against traditional female modesty. In what later became known as the "miniskirt riot," the occasion was disrupted by male protesters who detected cultural imperialism in the seemingly harmless fashion show. What began as a campus incident soon spread outside the university premises, most of the attacks directed against the U.S. Information Service and the American Library, and eventually resulting in the closing of dormitories and the university.⁴⁶

Ironically, many of the protesters were themselves disciples of the swing era, sporting the defiant Afro hairstyle and the notorious bell-bottom. The boys, who took part in harassing the female performers, saw no contradiction between their resort to what was inherently a chauvinist orgy and their image of their generation as the harbinger of gender equality. In their view, the miniskirt episode, an example of cultural neocolonialism, posed an affront to traditional mores, playing into the vanity of the bourgeois class; while, on the other hand, male celebration of the American counterculture, especially African American music and hairstyles, reinforced the youths' revolt against political authority and upper class social sensibility.

The miniskirt uproar can also be seen as signalling the transition from petty politics to organized group action. Earlier manifestations of political militancy, which were typically aired through individual

essays and campus editorials, had, by the late sixties, taken the form of collective expression. In fact, the miniskirt riot came in the wake of another momentous student protest outside the British embassy and Africa Hall, this time in opposition to London's complacent foreign policy toward Rhodesia's white supremacist regime. Since Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, the Ethiopian government had to deal with unwieldy student demonstrations, often denouncing any policy of rapprochement with Salisbury. In March 1968 approximately twenty-seven hundred college and high school pupils marched to the OAU headquarters demanding that force be used to topple the UDI regime. The students' bravado did not produce an immediate result, but would nonetheless influence their government's subsequent support for Zimbabwean freedom fighters and refugees.⁴⁷

Ideological Fissure

There existed a group of students at Haile Selassie I University, mainly those from other African countries, whose political views did not conform to those of the Ethiopian radicals. A few of these foreign students gained campuswide recognition as regular contributors to *News and Views*. Some wrote informative essays about their countries' histories and political developments, while the more critical of them spoke against the excesses of the post-independence politicians whom they accused of resorting to either outright despotism or one-party rule.⁴⁸ In certain instances, the NV editor, a Tanzanian, reprinted articles from other sources that were explicitly pro-Western. One such article described Joseph Mobutu's grab for power, with the help of the CIA, as signaling a positive start for the war-torn Congo. "Mobutu, age 35, is capable, hardworking, popularly incorruptible, dedicated to his country," the piece stated. It described his temperament as "pro-Belgian, pro-French, faintly pro-British, cautiously pro-American but most of all pro-Congolese."⁴⁹

By the time of Nkrumah's deposition from power through a military coup in February 1966, opposite ideological spectrums were evident among the politically active campus groups. One group harbored anti-Western sentiments and saw Nkrumah's removal from office as ominous. The other group, less sympathetic to Nkrumah, held African leaders accountable for the continent's failure both politically and economically. Ethiopian students dominated the former view and their foreign counterparts the latter.

In an essay published a week after Nkrumah's flight to Guinea, Kebede Worke, a prelaw student, described the former Ghanaian leader as "one of the architects of African unity" and "a never to be forgotten fighter of freedom."⁵⁰ "Despite his absence from power," rejoined another Ethiopian student referring to Nkrumah, "pan-Africanism would live like the ideas of John Locke and Rousseau and must not be weakened."⁵¹

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Jeremiah Muthomi, a third-year political science student, disagreed. The Kenyan national described Nkrumah as a leader of “indispensable pretensions.” Despite his lip service to the concept of unity, Nkrumah was a classic dictator who built a personality cult around himself: Nkrumahism. “As to whether he really was one of the architects of the OAU,” Muthomi argued, “history will tell why he was against the establishment of the OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa.”⁵²

Implicit in these opposing opinions was the ideological divide between the Ethiopian and the foreign students. As recipients of government scholarships, the African contributors to *NV* were careful so as not to offend the host country. Their writings, however outspoken against other continental figures, did not attack the West nor question the role of an absolutist monarch in a modern age. The Ethiopian students may not have written overtly about Haile Selassie, but felt freer to take positions on international issues even if such positions directly antagonized Haile Selassie’s foreign policy. Thus, it made sense for the young radicals like Kebede to side with Nkrumah, Haile Selassie’s pan-African nemesis, while the opposite was true of the scholarship students.

A commonly held belief in connection with the above point is that Ethiopian student radicalism owed its origins to influences from the foreign matriculants. According to Jesman and Kiflu, the “seeds of antidynastic sentiments” in Ethiopia were sown not so much by Communist agents as by the scholarship students.⁵³ A close perusal of the student literature reveals the misguided nature of the above assumption, for Ethiopian contributors consistently entertained more radical views than their foreign counterparts. This is by no means to discount the latter’s influence. Contact with the scholarship students helped encourage a more cosmopolitan atmosphere, which in turn countervailed the forces of narrow nationalism. Such exposure gave Ethiopians a more wholesome understanding of themselves, affording them the opportunity to evaluate their country’s socioeconomic conditions in a larger continental context.

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Open your eyes and look within
Are you satisfied with the life you're living?
We know where we're going; we know where we're from
We're leaving Babylon, we're going to our fatherland.

The above lines, taken from Bob Marley's 1977 hit "Exodus," not only underscore a chronic feeling of racial alienation in the capitalist West but also capture one of the most recurrent themes in the Caribbean and African American past, namely the theme of repatriation. Demographically, the Caribbean black population represents a small segment of the Afro-Atlantic world. This fact notwithstanding, there has been a conspicuous presence of West Indian returnees in Ethiopia for several decades: the Fords in the thirties, the Talbots and the Pipers in the forties and the fifties, and a continuous trickle of Rastafarian pilgrims to Shashemene since the late sixties. This chapter locates Ethiopia's aura as the Promised Land in terms of larger socioeconomic and political factors: Garveyism or racial Zionism, the great migration, the economic tumult of the thirties, and millenarianism.

Prewar Migration

Africa's image as the black man's refuge from slavery and racism in the West inspired a series of repatriation schemes. Between the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, thousands of American and Caribbean ex-slaves resettled in Sierra Leone and Liberia with the help of British and American abolitionists. Africa again rose as a salient theme in New World racial discourse in the early twentieth century, especially among the avant-gardes of the Harlem Renaissance, whose novels and poetry popularized a Pollyannaish image of the continent.

Although individuals such as Bishop Henry Turner and Edward Wilmot Blyden had called for mass migration to Africa in the late nineteenth century, it was in the Jamaican Marcus Garvey that the back-to-Africa movement found its most fervent advocate. A disciple of Booker T. Washington and his philosophy of thrift and industry, in 1917 Garvey

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established in Harlem the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) as an exemplary self-help organization. In order to implement his back-to-Africa plan, Garvey relied on the UNIA's relative business success to procure settlement land in Liberia; as well as on his shipping company, the Black Star Line, to provide affordable transportation for would-be immigrants.

The ambitious project never took off however. As it turned out, the ships that Garvey acquired at great financial sacrifice were never seaworthy. On top of this financial misfortune lay political and personal frictions between the UNIA and the Liberian government on the one hand, and between Garvey and the NAACP leadership on the other. While UNIA's fallout with the Liberian government jeopardized the land acquisition scheme, the bitter rivalry between Garvey and Du Bois, editor of NAACP's *Crisis*, resulted in Garvey's subsequent imprisonment and deportation to Jamaica.¹

With the bungled Liberian operation, Garveyites found in Ethiopia, the only other uncolonized territory in Africa, an idyllic setting for the execution of their Zionist scheme. After all, the legendary Queen of Sheba supposedly hailed from Ethiopia, as did many other black figures in the Scriptures. In more recent times, moreover, the far-off nation had metamorphosed into a poignant symbol of race pride, thanks to Menilek's military victory over Italy at the battle of Adwa.

In absolute terms, the actual number of blacks who migrated to East Africa was negligible. But unlike the Soviet Union where ideologues like Harry Haywood and Homer Smith found refuge, or unlike the more popular Paris where James Baldwin and Josephine Baker made their artistic debut, or even unlike South Africa where American blacks had a long history of missionary activity, repatriation--and not expatriation--characterized the initial intention of those who left for Ethiopia.

Explaining occidental blacks' love affair with Ethiopia requires an investigation into the push-pull factors. The pull factors, as Scott and Harris have orchestrated, center on racial romanticism and pan-African idealism. However, although the two authors discuss racism and poverty as obvious push factors, they fail to locate their thesis in the larger historical context of the time.

A study by Winston James shows that Garvey's call for the return to Africa mirrored a larger mass phenomenon sweeping through the Americas. In the United States, the great migration resulted in the northward movement of millions of Southern blacks in search of better living conditions. Farther south, the building of the Panama Canal triggered a large influx of West Indian workers to Central America. Even more massive was the islanders' exodus to North America in anticipation of higher wages and the chance for self-improvement. About 150,000 Caribbean immigrants disembarked at U.S. ports between 1899 and 1937,

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with an annual arrival of approximately 12,000 persons at the height of the influx in the early 1920s.²

The 1924 immigration act allocated a 2-percent annual quota to every nationality entering the United States, the percentage based on the 1890 demographic census. Since few non-Westerners migrated to America before 1890, the legislation kept out virtually all non-Nordic peoples from U.S. shores. The restriction gave American racism de facto legitimacy, the ensuing xenophobia sparking a process of reverse migration to the West Indies. It is against this background that migration to Ethiopia provided an alternative outlet other than going back to the islands or sticking it out in the States.³

In short, two symbiotic factors revitalized the age-old repatriation dream. On the American side was a culture of mobility or restlessness, thanks to the precedent set by the great migration, that instilled a psychology of adventure and fortune seeking in distant lands. On the African side, Ethiopia's idolized image promised a permanent escape from white racial persecution; while newsreel footage of the pomp and pageantry of Haile Selassie's coronation ceremony, which took place in November 1930, whipped up a nationalistic fervor of messianic proportions.⁴

Thousands of diasporan blacks may have entertained the idea of repatriation, but only a committed few possessed the financial means to do so. According to Jerrold Robbins, whose article in the *American Mercury* provides one of the few eyewitness accounts, two-thirds of the 150 or so Americans in Ethiopia in the early thirties were black immigrants. Robbins reported that they brought with them fanciful schemes such as "building roads, shooting monkeys for their skins, opening hair straightening parlors, caring for the teeth of the natives, teaching them jazz and spirituals, introducing barbecued pork, and opening cabarets and movie houses."⁵

Carleton Coon, another contemporary traveler and a Harvard anthropologist, also wrote of his encounter with two Afro-American singers in Ethiopia. Of the half dozen or so nightclubs in Addis Ababa before the war, the most popular among the foreign clientele was the Corsican-owned Tambourine. The Tambourine was the first club in Ethiopia where the color-bar was introduced, albeit under the pretext of *club privé*, instead of the more conventional "whites only" sign. Besides the two Somali waiters, the only other non-Europeans privy to the private club were its two black musicians. The minstrels, whom Coon identified, rather pejoratively, as Mrs. Chocolate and Rabbi Smith, were the African American Eudora Paris and the Barbadian Arnold Ford.

"Mrs. Chocolate commandeered, whenever possible, the latest phonograph records to arrive in Addis Ababa," Coon wrote of Mrs. Paris. "She used to listen to them attentively for two or three renditions,

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and would then dash to the piano to improvise her own interpretation. From then on Addis Ababa would hear it, until more records were forthcoming.”⁶

For the colored performers, popularity did not mean acceptance by the larger expatriate community. Such was the racial divide at the Tambourine that the white patrons knew little more than distorted hearsay about the Afro-American entertainers. “Some say that her husband was a Jamaica Negro,” Coon described Paris mockingly, “and that she came to Ethiopia thinking it was a black man’s paradise; others maintain that he was a Congo native, and that she went to the Congo to report his death to his own people, after which she sang and played her way across Africa to Addis Ababa.”⁷

The Harvard scholar portrayed Mr. Smith or, rather, Rabbi Ford, in equally demeaning terms. “Settling down with four wives less dusky, one presumes, than himself, he made himself reasonably comfortable in his new surroundings,” Coon wrote derisively, adding: “When, however, he leans over his strings to pluck out ‘Old Black Joe’ or ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,’ the discerning observer may observe a nostalgic gleam in his large and expressive eyes, and may surmise that he would willingly exchange his four consorts for one night in Harlem.”⁸

In the same way slavemasters saw free blacks as anathema to plantation life, colonial whites saw black returnees as a menace to the racial status quo. Despite his praetorian upbringing in Massachusetts, Coon seems to have been motivated by a similar agenda in his caricaturist portraits of the newcomers. Ford, whom Coon painted as a lascivious and out-of-place character, was in fact a well-respected patriarchal figure, revered as rabbi in his community. Writing in the previous year, Robbins had estimated the number of the returnees in Ethiopia to be in the scores. As a scholar and researcher, Coon, one safely assumes, was not unfamiliar with Robbins’ article. In his own account however, he gave the impression that the newcomers numbered fewer than a half dozen, implying once again such individuals were more of an oddity than the standard-bearers of a legitimate social movement.

Even if one argues that the immigrants had drastically dwindled in number by the time of Coon’s visit because of the imminent war, there is little reason to doubt that Afro-Americans at one point had a sizable presence. Scott identifies more than twenty returnees by name and occupation, and the list is by no means exhaustive. Harris also refers to correspondence between Addison Southard, the U.S. consul in Addis Ababa, and the State Department, expressing serious concerns about the ongoing pan-African trickle. In one letter, Southard dubbed the newcomers as “troublesome and often impecunious American Negroes of whom the most objectionable appear to be British West Indian Garveyites with American naturalization.” Not only did the immigrants drain

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the legation's meager resources, according to the consul, but they also tried to inculcate the natives with anti-European sentiments. Southard's recommendation to the State Department stressed that measures be taken against such immigrants, even if it meant denying them passports and visas.⁹

Reports of the above nature prompted the State Department to issue a travel advisory, warning about job scarcity and rancid living conditions in Ethiopia. Although a mass exodus never materialized to the officials' relief, the search for a racial homeland would remain a major preoccupation within Garveyite circles. In 1932, in the same year the cautionary travel note appeared, the Chicago-based "Peace Movement of Ethiopia" was busy reviving the back-to-Africa platform and recruiting would-be immigrants. The movement captured national attention in 1939, when it tried to organize a march in Washington, D.C., in support of Senator Theodore G. Bilbo's "Negro Repatriation Bill." Of course, Bilbo was denounced by most blacks for his white supremacist ideology. But reminiscent of the many Garveyites who had turned a blind eye to their leader's endorsement of the Ku Klux Klan for its anti-integrationist stance, these racial nationalists embraced Bilbo's repatriation bill out of a sheer economic desperation.¹⁰

As shown above, a myriad of factors (a culture of mobility, economic and racial pressures, escapism and messianic anticipation) kept alive the age-old pan-African conviction through the prewar years. The next aspect to consider is the Ethiopian side of the equation.

Unfortunately, any effort toward a conclusive assessment of the prewar black experience in Ethiopia is a rather futile exercise because of limited and often contradictory data. Individuals' experience in Ethiopia, positive or negative, seemed to have been dictated not so much by Ethiopian attitudes as by their personal backgrounds: levels of education, types of skill, goals, and expectations prior to migration.

Of the twenty-three or so immigrants identified by name in Scott's *Sons of Sheba's Race* are: two doctors, two aviators, several teachers, three or four musicians, a fashion designer, an auto mechanic, a watch maker, and two carpenters. The physicians and the pilots, and possibly the teachers, were government recruits; while the rest arrived in Ethiopia on their own initiatives.¹¹

There were obvious and genuine reasons why those with specialized skills were recruited by the government. Enlightened Ethiopian officials "understood that foreign blacks posed far less of a threat to Ethiopian security and sensitivities than did whites," writes Scott. "They reasoned that if skilled U.S. blacks would come to Ethiopia and become citizens, they would not have or display the arrogance and sense of superiority illy concealed by white men and women, who would probably retain their foreign nationality and with it their foreign prejudices." Thus, at

policy level, there was a preference for the type of black immigrants with relevant educational and technical expertise, whose presence would not only counter white influence on Ethiopia but would also exhort Ethiopian school-goers to higher academic pursuits.¹²

Ironically, those who left for Ethiopia on their own seem to have been the ones better fitted psychologically and physically for the rugged African lifestyle, as they had little incentive to look back to the New World. Those who came as government recruits tended to stay for shorter durations and thought of themselves not as returnees but as sojourners. The self-driven immigrants, most of them of West Indian descent, on the other hand, understood their return to Africa in Zionist terms. Illustrative of this latter group is the experience of the aforementioned Arnold Ford and his wife Mignon.

Having settled in Harlem in the 1910s, the Barbadian Ford rose to prominence as Liberty Hall's music master, composing classics such as "Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers," also known as the UNIA Universal Anthem.¹³ Following the collapse of the UNIA in the aftermath of Garvey's imprisonment and subsequent deportation, Ford became a convert to Judaism, perhaps as a result of an encounter with Professor Tamrat Emmanuel, the Ethiopian Jew who visited New York in the 1920s. A charismatic figure, Ford soon rose to the rank of Rabbi within the fledgling community of Harlem's black Hebrews, a nationalist sect that sought association with Ethiopian Jewry known as Falasha or Bete-Israel.¹⁴

Ford arrived in Ethiopia in 1930, perhaps in good time to witness Haile Selassie's historic coronation, and was soon joined by a few more West Indian immigrants from Harlem, among them Mignon Innes, Ford's would-be wife. If Ford had originally intended to proceed to Gondar to join the Bete-Israelis there, financial considerations would render Addis Ababa a more practical domicile, especially since his wife Mignon, some thirty years his junior, did not seem to share his religious enthusiasm. The Fords together with Eudora and Nancy Paris, daughter and mother respectively, constituted the focal point of the emigré community in the capital, making ends meet as musicians and artisans. It was not long before tragedy struck close quarters however, for Mr. Ford died in September 1935 at the age of fifty-eight.¹⁵

To a community whose fate already hung in the balance by Italy's menacing gesture, the sudden death of its patriarchal figure was the last straw. Whereas most of the immigrants took Mussolini's war bravado seriously enough to head back to the United States, Ford's young widow, then already a mother of two, and her friend Alberta Tamas decided to stick it out in their adopted homeland. Immediately after the war, the two founded the Bait Ouriel School, later renamed the Princess Zenemework School in memory of one of Haile Selassie's deceased daughters. Before its nationalization by the Marxist government in the mid-seventies, the



Mrs. Mignon Ford (seated) with her two sons and two adopted daughters

school, with funding from the government and foreign philanthropists, would grow to a campus of six hundred students with a teaching staff of sixteen.¹⁶

Of the government-invited visitors, Hubert Julian (the Black Eagle) and John C. Robinson (the Brown Condor) stand out as the most memorable. The flamboyant Julian, the first black aviator in Ethiopia, arrived in Addis Ababa in May 1930 under Melaku's behest. Melaku did not know that the Trinidadian-born Harlemite, far from being a professional pilot, only held a students' license to fly. Inexperience did not prevent the Black Eagle from staging a successful aerial show and a

classic parachute jump in Addis Ababa in preparation for the emperor's coronation fanfare. The popular Harlemiter cut a dashing figure, at least until the eve of the coronation. The country owned three planes, the recently purchased Gypsy Moth being Tefari's most prized possession. Julian's unauthorized attempt to fly the new plane on the final day of rehearsal ended in a disastrous crash, a 30 percent depreciation of the entire royal fleet. Barely scathed by the accident, the dissolute Julian left the country rather than face imprisonment for failure to obey orders. He returned to Ethiopia in 1935 as a wartime volunteer, but only to leave the country again on charges of misdemeanors, among them several unpaid debts to creditors and insubordination in the military.¹⁷

Robinson, Melaku's other recruit, would earn respect and admiration for his participation in the Ethiopian war effort. A graduate of Tuskegee Institute in automotive mechanics, the Florida-born Robinson came North in the mid-1920s, first settling in Detroit and then moving west to Chicago, where he perhaps expected less competition in the auto repair business. In the City of Big Shoulders, Robinson found a kindred spirit in Cornelius Coffey who, despite an introverted personality, shared his enthusiasm for flight. Ambition and persistence led the two South Side youths, still in their twenties, to the Curtiss-Wright aeronautic school, from which they graduated with high honors, leading to their retention by the same institution to teach other black trainees. Aware of the Ethiopian government's need for skilled manpower, both Robinson and Coffey toyed with the idea of emigration, but it was Robinson who joined the country's army as a wartime volunteer in the summer of 1935.¹⁸

In his role as the emperor's personal courier, Robinson served as a lifeline between Addis Ababa and the theaters of war, ferrying special military dispatches as well as whatever human and material cargo his plane could fit. Back home he was lionized by the black press as Colonel Robinson, head of the Ethiopian imperial air force. Ethiopia, however, possessed no air force other than a few outdated planes, and the Brown Condor did not have to worry about upgrading his civilian training to that of a combat pilot. Still, Robinson's escapades into the front lines demanded great daring and much navigational dexterity lest he become easy prey to enemy fire. In spring 1936, as Addis Ababa's fall loomed imminent, the aviator returned to Chicago weary and broke, but proud of the badge of captain that the Ethiopian government bestowed on him for his courageous service.¹⁹

William Shack describes the prewar migration to Ethiopia as a chapter in pan-African racial solidarity. A more critical appraisal of the subject shows that pan-African encounters in prewar East Africa were inconsequential in shaping or altering racial attitudes. Because the immigrants were still going through the initial phase of adjustment when Italy invaded, they showed little sign of acculturation into their

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new setting. In any case, their numbers were too meager to have affected Ethiopian racial sentiments one way or the other. Even in Addis Ababa, where the newcomers congregated, their social interaction with the host community was circumscribed by religious and language differences. Most Addis Ababans did not know about the overseas guests; and the few who did manifested no uniform response. Luminaries such as Kentiba Gebru Desta, Hakim Warqneh, and Haile Selassie seemed to cultivate a positive rapport with the emigré community; while other members of the aristocracy, having fallen prey to European racial hearsay, kept minimal contact with the newcomers.

John Robinson, the aforesaid wartime volunteer, observed firsthand the negative impact Europeans were having on intrarace relations between Ethiopians and their foreign cousins. "The white influence over here is very, very strong. Whites have poisoned the minds of the Ethiopians against Afro-Americans." On the other hand, Afro-American immigrants came with a preconceived notion about Africans that was both condescending and paternalistic, and Robinson was equally critical of that: what the "average Negro wants to do after he lands is to tell the emperor how to run his country. He comes here expecting to be honored because he is an American."²⁰

In other words, just as there were incidents of Ethiopian national snobbery, there were instances where the actions of the returnees, perhaps out of a sheer survival instinct, helped buttress existing Western racial pretenses. Paris and Ford saw the Tambourine as one place where their talents could be rewarded, even though the club's color-bar policy kept away the natives. The Jim Crow nightclub was eventually closed not because of the Afro-Americans' protest, but due to the Ethiopians' stubborn refusal to put up with such colonial nonsense, a fact that Even the racist Coon found worth noting as the excerpt below tells:

Like all proud peoples, the Ethiopians took this ill. On several occasions they tried to crash the gate in twos and threes, attired in their most spotless evening garments, but each time they were refused entrance, or at best permitted a quick drink at the bar. One fateful evening we saw a squadron of twenty or more intrepid young Ethiopians, most of them connected in one way or another with the government, enter en masse. They demanded the right to sit in the inner room, and to be served and amused. This privilege the proprietor denied them. After much talking, blows ensued; persons holding responsible posts discreetly disappeared, and finally the invaders took their departure. The triumph of the "club privé" was short-lived, however, for within an hour a company of His Majesty's soldiers arrived, ejected the revelers, and closed the establishment permanently.²¹

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In general, the immigrants' stay in prewar Ethiopia was too brief to have a lasting significance on the host society. Their Ethiopian experience, however, did make a difference on public perception back home. Former emigrés helped assuage racial misgivings about Ethiopians, misgivings that were perpetuated by white writers but later mirrored in the black press.

A controversial topic in the black media during the mid-1930s was the question of Ethiopian racial identity. Did the Ethiopians really see themselves as Africans? If so, did they accept foreign blacks as racial kin? Did they care? The more convincing answers to these questions came naturally from the prewar travelers, many of whom joined the thick of the antifascist battle back in America.

Dorothy Bayen, one of the last to leave Ethiopia before Addis Ababa's fall, rejected as absurd allegations about Ethiopian racial chauvinism. As the wife of a noted Ethiopian, the African American woman was in a better position than most immigrants to learn about Ethiopian social and cultural subtleties. "I was received kindly by both the royal family and the common people," Bayen told Scott during a private interview. "Mrs. Bayen was profuse in her praise of the way she and her son were accepted by all classes of the Ethiopian society," was Scott's conclusion.²²

Of all the prewar travelers to Ethiopia, Jamaican-born Joel A. Rogers remains the most widely read if not the most influential pro-Ethiopian pamphleteer. In the *Real Facts about Ethiopia*, a popular tract based on Rogers' personal interview with Haile Selassie, the gifted writer explained that Ethiopians saw themselves as a "nation" and not as a "race" of people. They refused to be called "negroes," not because they denied their blackness, but because the word had a pejorative implication of slavery. Otherwise, Ethiopians saw Africans of the New World as kith and kin and extended a warm welcome to those already in their midst. "Afro-Americans in Ethiopia will be well received provided that they do not go there with airs of superiority," Rogers noted.²³

Rogers' observation was on the mark. In Ethiopia, the black newcomers were initiated into a society where class and class pretensions mattered more than race. By Western standards many immigrants eked out a rough hand-to-mouth existence in a country where jobs were scarce, industries and modern amenities unheard of. By local measurements, however, the newcomers were better off than the average Ethiopian and some even prospered. The singer Eudora Paris, who doubled as a fashion designer for some of the aristocratic women, maintained an affluent lifestyle by local standards, owning a large house and employing several servants. Returning to New York with her mother and her adopted Ethiopian son, Paris would become a leading antiwar activist and would speak regularly on the EWF platform.²⁴

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Another individual who greatly treasured his African experience was John Robinson. Like Paris, Robinson became the magnet for the local antifascist lobby in Chicago and was one of the well-sought-after speakers on the Ethiopian crisis. Despite his earlier remarks about the insidious European effect on the peoples' psyche, the airman would later return to Ethiopia to help in postwar reconstruction.²⁵

Postwar Migration

America's postwar economic boom opened greater job opportunities, reversing earlier trends of emigration to Africa or to the Caribbean. Ironically, this was when Western expertise was in dire need in Ethiopia, for postwar reconstruction depended on the kind of educated manpower that Italian occupation made sure never flourished. As in the twenties and thirties, the newly restored Ethiopian government took the initiative in soliciting the technical expertise of skilled immigrants. In 1943, while on an official visit to Washington, D.C., vice-minister of finance, Yilma Deressa, contacted William Leo Hansberry, the wartime pro-Ethiopian activist and the founder of the Howard University-based Ethiopian Research Council. This resulted in the immediate consideration of several would-be immigrants as well as the hiring of an agent, with a salary of \$500 a month, to continue the recruitment process.²⁶

Of those nominated as potential employees, only a dozen or so arrived in Addis Ababa by the mid-forties. Some went on their own with nominal government support, while others immigrated under contractual terms. The former consisted mostly of men of letters, teachers and writers who saw themselves as pan-African visionaries. The latter, numbering a half dozen, were mostly mechanics and technicians from Tuskegee whom Robinson recruited to work as maintenance crew for the U.S.-supplied planes under the Lend-Lease program. The group returned to Tuskegee at the end of its contract in 1946, but Robinson remained behind as an aviation instructor.²⁷

Initially, the former war hero was assigned to train military pilots at the recently opened air force academy headed by a Swedish philanthropist and aerophile, Carl Gustaf Von Rosen. The relationship between the Swedish count and the Afro-American pilot was far from smooth however, and perhaps said as much about existing racial tensions between white and black expatriates in the country. Von Rosen, who, like the Condor, had a history of flying in Ethiopia dating to the Italo-Ethiopian war, was incensed at having a black trainer as an assistant. Robinson, for his part, could not justify the undue attention accorded to Von Rosen simply because he was an official agent of the Swedish government. A verbal incident, which turned into a fist fight, sent Von Rosen to the hospital with a broken jaw, while it cost Robinson his position at the institution, after which he became more focused on the import-export business that



John Robinson of Chicago receiving a hero's welcome on his return home from Ethiopia. Robinson is in the center and Janet Bragg is on his right with flowers

he and Prince Makonnen, Haile Selassie's second son, had jointly started. Robinson died in an air accident in March 1954 at the age of fifty-one, and his funeral was attended by a large number of friends, including the emperor and his family.²⁸

Robinson's legacy to the first generation of Ethiopian pilots goes beyond the imparting of technical know-how. In an age where white skin seemed the prerequisite for the mastery of any modern technology, his presence demystified the science of flying and provided a powerful role model, which in turn explains why Ethiopia, although a poor country,

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has since maintained a successful airline business with highly competent pilots and aircraft technicians.

Robinson also served as a social liaison between postwar Ethiopia and black America. A few Ethiopians who went to the United States for further studies in the forties and fifties bore notes from Robinson introducing them to friends and acquaintances. This was how the connection between Janet Waterford Harmon Bragg, also another aviation pioneer and a protégé of Robinson, and the Ethiopian students in North America began. Between 1947 and 1974 Bragg would play host to more than one hundred Ethiopian students, some of whom would later gain prominence as ambassadors and high-ranking officials. A home away from home, her Chicago apartment served as a popular holiday rendezvous for the homesick students. On one occasion in fact, during Haile Selassie's visit to Chicago in summer 1954, her house would turn into an impromptu royal salon, where diplomats and dignitaries jockeyed for a quick hair cut in one room and for a bite of American burgers in another.²⁹

A native of Georgia and a graduate of Spelman College with a degree in nursing, Bragg came to Chicago in 1930 in the hope that the nursing profession would pay better and the medical facility would not be as strictly segregated. While working for Metropolitan Insurance as a health inspector, thanks to a postgraduate degree from Loyola, in her spare time she attended aviation classes under the instruction of Robinson and Coffey. Having purchased a private plane, itself a rare feat in the midst of the Great Depression, she joined other black aviation enthusiasts in forming the Challenger Aero Club, later the Challenger Air Pilots' Association. Given the hostility if not outright refusal by airports to serve black fliers, the club helped organize the first African American owned and operated airstrip in Robbins, Illinois.³⁰

When Bragg began flying in the thirties, she thought she was simply following in the footsteps of Bessie Coleman, the first African American airwoman. But a decade later, having overcome a series of racial and gender discriminations, the Georgian native would hold her own as the first black woman to qualify for a commercial pilot license. Still, despite an impressive array of achievements, Bragg was denied the privilege of joining the Women's Auxiliary Service Pilots (WASP) during World War II, nor was she able to volunteer as an army nurse because of the military's resort to quota for black medics.³¹

Finding solace in her nursing profession, she launched a lucrative nursing home business after the war, while flying and community work remained her lifelong avocations. Without children of her own, she nurtured many Ethiopian teenagers and young adults, helping them adjust culturally, arranging for financial aids, and in general being responsible for their successful completion of their college careers. In recognition of her contribution to the youths' well being, for which she earned the name

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“Sister” as her sobriquet, in 1955 Bragg travelled to Ethiopia honoring a personal invitation by Haile Selassie.

Begun as a half-hearted venture, Bragg’s African trip dramatized once again the racial bond that the Ethiopian government consciously sought to cultivate with black America. Robinson had died the previous year, but among his friends were the West Indian David Talbot and his wife, in whose company Bragg attended the emperor’s silver jubilee. The affection her former students showed her, the flattering columns in the local newspapers, and the courteous reception she met everywhere she went were more than she ever expected: “After a few weeks in Addis Ababa I felt I belonged there. . . . I even came to feel that my ancestors might well have come from Ethiopia.”³²

The national attention accorded her, from an audience with the emperor to a dinner invitation by the archbishop, did not pass unnoticed by Ambassador Joseph Simonson, who, like the rest of the embassy crew, wondered why the fuss over an ordinary black woman from Chicago. “I don’t think he fully understood how much bias there still was against blacks in the United States at that time – any blacks, even children of high-ranking parents from foreign countries,” Bragg would later reflect on her luncheon with the curious American official. “The people in Ethiopia knew that I had helped their children do well in a difficult environment, and they were grateful,” was her answer.³³

Bragg returned home three months later as Ethiopia’s honorary consul general in Chicago, a nonsalaried position but still with the power to carry out minor consular activities such as issuing visas. Although she led an extraordinary life until her death in 1993 at the age of eighty-six, in her final decades Bragg had to come to terms with the tragic turn of events in Ethiopia, namely the Marxist red terror in which thousands of Ethiopians, including many of her former students and their relatives, were either murdered or languished in jail.³⁴

Circumstances may have conferred national notoriety on Robinson and Bragg, but they were not the only influential African Americans of their time. Other less-known individuals took part in Ethiopian postwar reconstruction, among them the Medhane Alem School headmaster, Thomas Fletcher, and his teaching staff; William Steen and Homer Smith, writers; and Charles Digges, a Texas-born medical doctor. A one-time resident of Paris, Digges ran a health clinic in Debra-Berehan and later in Diredawa until his death there in 1970. From 1944 to 1946 Steen edited the two government English language publications: the *Ethiopian Herald* and the *Ethiopian Review*. Smith, who arrived in Addis Ababa with a Russian wife after years of self-exile in the Soviet Union, and worked as a correspondent for the Associated Press, succeeded Steen as the editor of the *Ethiopian Review* and also introduced the English version of *Mannen*, a magazine specializing in art and literature.³⁵



African Americans in Addis Ababa in the 1940s. Kneeling left to right: Andrew Howard Hester, Edward Eugene Jones, and Edgar F. Love. Standing: David Talbot, Thurlow Evans Tibbs, James William Cheeks, the Reverend Mr. Hamilton, John Robinson, and Edgar D. Draper

After the prematurely deceased Robinson, the most popular black immigrant in Ethiopia was the Guyanese-born David Talbot, whose journalistic work left an indelible mark on the evolution of the modern press in Ethiopia. Talbot arrived in Ethiopia in 1943. After teaching in a government-run school in Harrar for some years, he replaced Steen as the editor of the *Ethiopian Herald*. Because of his experience as a newspaper editor in the United States, Talbot brought a semblance of modernity to the *Herald*, and under him the paper evolved from a tabloid-size weekly to a full-fledged daily.³⁶

Talbot's contribution was not confined to journalism alone. Although lacking formal training in history, the West Indian produced three voluminous works on Ethiopia for the general reader. Inspired by Mrs. Ford's exemplary role as an educator, Talbot founded the American Institute, which offered evening classes at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Perhaps more than any other foreigner of his time, Talbot understood the subtlety of the Ethiopian elite, its intricacy and its behind-the-scenes intrigues. As a favored royal courtier and a palace confidant, he was regularly summoned to refine speech drafts in English and was at one point considered for translating Haile Selassie's Amharic autobiography.

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In return for his services, the Guyanese expatriate and his Egyptian wife enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle: a lucrative government salary, a villa in the capital, and an agricultural estate in Ambo.³⁷

In the 1950s Ethiopians with specialized skills and radical ideas were returning from overseas universities in droves. The young intellectuals, as they came to be known collectively, called for the Ethiopianization of the bureaucracy and for the dismantling of royal patronage in favor of meritocracy. Because of his status as a well-paid and well-connected expatriate, and because of the *Herald's* consistently pro-American tone, the young intellectuals saw Talbot as an agent of Western neocolonialism: a white face in black mask. Yakob Wolde-Mariam, a British-educated Ethiopian, replaced Talbot and Homer Smith as the editor of the *Herald* and *Mannen* respectively. The latter, after sixteen years in Ethiopia, left for Minnesota in 1962, and Talbot for a time considered the possibility of joining his compatriot T. R. Makonnen in Ghana. Fortunately for the West Indian, his contacts in high places paid off, and he was moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an expert in African affairs and radio commentator.³⁸

The postwar immigrants, although fewer in number than their prewar counterparts, played an important role in the country's modernization effort. In areas such as aviation, education, and journalism, emigré blacks contributed to the postwar rehabilitation in ways that few European or Euro-American groups did. Their legacy becomes all the more unique as one considers the fact that, unlike white missionaries or diplomats, the former did not have the support of major institutions or governments.

No doubt that the newcomers found it stressful to live in a society whose language and culture they could not fully comprehend. Even considering such inconveniences, Ford, Talbot, and Robinson found in Ethiopia what had long eluded them in America: freedom, dignity, and national recognition; and hence their adoption of Ethiopia as a second home.

In the final analysis, the immigrants' loyalty to Ethiopia should be measured not by their success but by the suffering they shared with the local citizenry. The fates of Ford and Talbot in the cataclysmic seventies and eighties were no different from the fates of the Ethiopians of similar social background. Given his association with the previous government, Talbot was among the many palace functionaries the Derg let go. Talbot, as did Mrs. Ford, had his school forcibly closed and his villa on Bole Road confiscated. Broke and with failing eye sight, the Guyanese immigrant died in obscurity in 1988.³⁹ The more resourceful Ford was not as unfortunate, but still had to flee the red terror and join her two sons in Washington, D.C., to weather the storm. She later returned to her adopted homeland and lived there intermittently. She died in Washington in February 1995 and was buried in Addis Ababa at the Petros-Paulos cemetery.⁴⁰



Anthropologist William Shack while on field work in a village in southwestern Ethiopia. With him are his wife Mrs. Dorothy Shack, their baby son Haile, and their Ethiopian household

Ethiopia and Black America After Civil Rights

As the case of Janet Bragg best demonstrates, a discussion of postwar black interest in Ethiopia should not be confined to repatriates only. William A. Shack and William Leo Hansberry have, for example, played pioneering roles in the evolution of Ethiopian studies. In the 1930s, long before any American university began offering courses in African history, Hansberry tried to organize a systematic inquiry into Ethiopian antiquities under the auspices of the Howard University-based Ethiopian Research Council. After the war, he remained closely connected with Ethiopian officials in Washington, contributing regularly newspaper columns and journal articles on Ethiopia, for which he was awarded the 1965 Haile Selassie Africa Prize. A generation younger than Hansberry, William Shack spent several years in Ethiopia doing fieldwork on Gurage culture and teaching at the HSIU. Whereas Hansberry's approach belonged to the Du Boisian tradition of cultural affirmation, Shack's training as an anthropologist at the University of Chicago and at the London School of Economics emphasized original fieldwork and data gathering. His research and sojourn among the Gurage, although interrupted by the student unrest of the late sixties, led to numerous publications, the basis of his renown as a distinguished Africanist.

In more recent years, William Scott and Joseph Harris have reinvigorated the study of Ethiopian history with fresh insights, while Henry Louis Gates and Cornell West have often incorporated Ethiopianist themes in their talks and writings. For a while, Ethiopia also captured the

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interest of the black caucus in the U.S. capital, albeit for a much different reason. The death of Congressman Mickey Leland in a plane crash in August 1989, while on a humanitarian mission to the Horn, was a sad moment on Capitol Hill, specifically so for the tightly knit black law makers. The tragedy paved the way for establishing the Mickey Leland Center on World Hunger and Peace at Texas Southern University and perhaps was a factor in President Bill Clinton's appointment of Irvin Hicks as the first African American ambassador to Ethiopia.

Shack, Hansberry, Hicks, and West by no means constitute a representative sample of society. Academic interests do not necessarily reflect popular perceptions. Contemporary African American attitudes toward Ethiopia are in fact more in tune with eighteenth-century Hobbesian worldviews than with the sentiments of the above individuals. In light of such apparent discrepancy between current and past perceptions, one should therefore address the reasons behind the negative transformation in Ethiopian imagery in the last several decades.

First, although the ancient nation aroused international black sympathy and support during the fascist invasion, Rome's eventual conquest, albeit a short-lived one, negated the positive symbolism the country had long signified. By the 1950s the age-old fascination with Ethiopia as a symbol of anticolonial defiance had given way to more practical and timely concerns. With decolonization, occidental blacks could proudly identify with other African societies with which they had more binding cultural and historical affiliations. To that effect, West Africa reclaimed its antebellum image as a racial haven and became home to celebrities such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Stokely Carmichael, later Kwame Toure.

In East Africa, too, where cultural or kinship factors were much less consequential, Kenya eclipsed Ethiopia as a more popular destination because of its relative amenability to Western lifestyle. The fact that Tom Mboya, Kenya's best known politician after Kenyatta, made disparaging remarks about the black returnees, or the fact that the parliament formally voted against extending citizenship rights to such newcomers, had little deterrent effect. In 1966, in fact, Maulana Karenga, a Californian civil rights activist, became so enamored with East Africa that he adopted Swahili words and concepts as the basis of Kwanzaa, a thanksgiving celebration that has since become the African American equivalent of Christmas.⁴¹

Progress at home, as a result of changes wrought by the civil rights movement, also rendered moot the push factors of the previous decades. Energized by the passage of the historic civil rights acts, African American struggle became ever more inwardly focused from the 1960s on. Even the nationalist fringe, associated with the Nation of Islam, no longer advocated emigration but called for the right to form an independent

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black nation within America. As for the campus militants and the Black Power youth, the introduction of the Peace Corps and various university exchange programs provided a more realistic way of getting in touch with their African roots, and without the prohibitive cost that such a venture would have entailed if carried out on one's own.

The final coup de grace to Ethiopia's international image was the televised broadcast of the 1974 starvation. Drought and famine have had a long, recurrent history in the African Sahel. But the media's footage of royal extravagance in the midst of unparalleled human suffering was more than the eye could take, and the incident deflated Haile Selassie's international stature overnight. Initially, the anti-aristocratic revolution that erupted in the wake of the famine raised few eyebrows abroad, but what most did not understand was that the country never developed an alternative political tradition outside the institution of monarchy. The ousting of the emperor by the Marxist Derg was therefore bound to an even more odious end: an era of red terror in which thousands perished; a costly war with Somalia; a prolonged civil war; and the deadliest drought yet, out of which rose a new perception of Ethiopia as a popular metaphor for human misery.

Pipers and the Shashemene Settlement

Despite increased marginalization on the world stage, Ethiopia continued to have special appeal to thousands of West Indians who held on tightly to certain millennial beliefs. Even in mainland North America, where Ethiopianism rapidly declined for the reasons discussed above, there remained scattered pockets of West Indian Garveyites and members of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) who regarded repatriation as their ultimate goal. In 1947, for example, EWF's Chicago chapter wrote to the ministry of foreign affairs in Addis Ababa, inquiring about the possibility of resettlement for more than three hundred of its members, sixty-eight of them skilled mechanics with capital totaling \$27,400 in cash, \$30,880 in clothes, and \$12,565 in tools. A New York-based Montserratian couple, James and Helen Piper, traveled to Addis Ababa the next year to deliver the EWF's petition in person, to which the government finally responded by allocating some five hundred acres of land located between the Malkoda river and the outskirts of the Rift Valley town of Shashemene.⁴²

It is worth noting that during the same period, 1949-1951, Haile Selassie had been considering a petition from the Asian community in South Africa, through the intercession of Prince Ali Khan of Pakistan, to relocate to Ethiopia as farmers and businessmen. In contrast to its positive response to the Afro-American proposal, the government rejected this particular petition following the advice by Emmanuel Abraham, its ambassador to India, that the would-be immigrants from South Africa

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held social and cultural values that the Ethiopians would find denigrating and racist. Set against the backdrop of the failed Asian settlement scheme, the EWF land award was not only motivated by a gesture of gratitude for the support Ethiopia received from diasporan blacks during the country's hours of distress, but it also demonstrated a conscious and selective immigration policy.⁴³

The year 1955 marked the beginning of the homestead settlement with the arrival of the Pipers, and possibly of a few other federationists, at Malkoda, hitherto the personal estate of the emperor. The EWF headquarters in New York soon dispatched news of the land grant to Jamaica and urged members to live up to the challenge. The communication stressed several points. First, since the Ethiopian government had no resources to cope with large-scale migration, the would-be settlers must be of the "pioneering caliber" and should be willing to forgo physical and material comforts. Second, greed and individualism should be replaced by a "cooperative spirit of all for one and one for all." Third, the first groups of pioneer settlers should possess such practical skills as farming, plumbing, masonry, and carpentry, to be followed subsequently by professionals like doctors, nurses, and teachers. Fourth, the five-hundred-acre estate was donated on a "trial basis," which meant that gainful use of it might lead to further rewards. The letter concluded by instructing each EWF chapter in Jamaica to organize fund-raising drives to cover transportation and resettlement expenses of qualified individuals.⁴⁴

In Jamaica, where the peasantry had always connected land with personal freedom and economic independence, news of the land grant invoked powerful imagery. Shashemene symbolized the antitheses of the Sufferers' experience in the West: access to economic opportunity and personal freedom. It also confirmed the Rastafarians' perception of Ethiopia as the Promised Land and of Haile Selassie as the Messiah. Jamaican migration to England in search of employment and better living conditions had risen sharply in the postwar years. But after report of the generous land offer, which, with distorted exaggeration, grew into a much fancier pan-African design, reached the Caribbean, "England no, Ethiopia yes!" became a popular motto. Consequently, the Rastafarian movement experienced dramatic and explosive growth, its belief in mass migration becoming ever more entrenched in the psyche of the working class.⁴⁵

News of the land grant triggered a series of undue messianic expectations, some with tragic conclusions. In September 1955, when Maymie Richardson of New York visited the EWF branch in Kingston, rumors circulated about the imminent arrival of Ethiopian ships to take the Rastas back to Africa. In March 1958, similar reports surfaced in the Jamaican press about groups of Rasta faithful assembled in Kingston, where self-cleansing rituals and prayer services were underway in preparation for a miraculous mass deliverance.⁴⁶

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The most notorious of these millenarian episodes was the 1959 Claudius Henry fiasco. Because of Henry's fiery sermons reminiscent of Bedward several decades earlier, his African Reform Church in Kingston had become widely known in Rastafarian circles. Calling himself "Repairer of the Bridge," in the summer of 1959 Henry distributed several thousand leaflets, each worth a shilling, proclaiming the fifth of October as the day of return. Already predisposed to certain millennial ideals, his followers received the leaflets quite literally. Urban peddlers and rural farmers converged at Henry's headquarters in early October, hundreds having sold land and property in the process.⁴⁷

In the aftermath of the fiasco, Henry was imprisoned and then released with a fine of one hundred pounds. But the social crisis that ensued, as a result of the many Jamaicans left bankrupt by his deception, forced the government to pay closer attention. More specifically, the Henry crisis prompted the creation of a research team headed by a group of university professors to look into the Rastafarians' plight. In masterful orchestration of the intellectuals' sense of social responsibility and, at the same time, the need for scholarly integrity, in 1960 the team published what many consider to be a classic study on Rastafarianism. Situating the Sufferers' experience in a Jamaican sociohistorical context, the monograph recommended that the government adopt a number of ameliorative measures.⁴⁸

In accordance with the first point of the recommendation, in 1961 the Norman Manley government launched an exploratory "mission" to Ethiopia and to four other countries in Africa to study the feasibility of repatriation. Led by Courtenay Leslie, a medical doctor, the Mission consisted of nine men, including Rastafarian and EWF representatives, as well as a journalist.

During the week-long stay in Ethiopia, from April 16 to 23, the group traveled widely and met with various officials, including the head of the Orthodox church, with whom it discussed theosophy. When asked by members of the mission whether he believed in the emperor's divinity, Patriarch Basilios explained that Haile Selassie was an ordinary human being, a devout Christian at that. The Messiah was not expected to reveal his identity, his guests retorted, for "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased."⁴⁹

Even more significant than the confab with the Patriarch, an audience with the emperor marked the highlight of the historic tour. The monarch received the delegation as "brothers of one blood and race," presenting each member with a gold medal as souvenir. Tackling the issue of repatriation, he explained his readiness to provide additional land for settlement after the specific details had been worked out between the Ethiopian and the Jamaican governments.⁵⁰

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An American traveler, John Gunther, had written in 1955 that Ethiopians, however black in complexion, considered themselves white and looked down disparagingly on “Negroid” Africans.” His point was corroborated by Harold Isaacs, another white writer, who argued that Ethiopian officials, including the late Melaku Bayen, rejected any identification with colored Americans. Like the anthropologist Carleton Coon, Isaacs and Gunther perpetuated the post-Adwa myth of Ethiopians as black Caucasians, even though such racial classifications had been proven to be baseless by then.⁵¹

Contrary to what they had read and were prepared for, the Jamaicans experienced no signs of racial or cultural hostility. In fact, their subsequent report dismissed as unfounded the commonly held stereotype of Ethiopians. “On one point the Mission would like to make an observation,” their report to the Jamaican government stated. “There has been a notion spread by certain publications, and touted by many non-Africans, that people of Ethiopia and the Emperor consider themselves apart and above from the peoples of central Africa, the so-called ‘Negroids.’ Nothing of the kind has been observed by the Mission on their visit to Africa.”⁵²

The mission endorsed Jamaican migration to Ethiopia not only on the basis of race as a binding factor, but also on sound and practical ground. Outside the capital, the group inspected sites like the Koka hydropower dam, the coffee-growing region of Jimma, the Wanji sugar factory, and the resettlement land in Shashemene. At all these sites the delegates observed certain similarities between Ethiopia and Jamaica, namely that both were agricultural nations with identical climates. In their report, the visitors noted that Jamaicans possessed transferrable agricultural skills. Jamaica had long exported coffee, sugar, and sugar-related products like rum and molasses to the world market. This meant that West Indian expertise could, among other things, be applied to the expansion of the Ethiopian economy.⁵³

The above report, however favorable to the repatriation question, found no sympathetic hearing from the new prime minister, Alexander Bustamante, whose Jamaican Labor Party (JLP), ousted Manley’s Peoples’ National Party (PNP) during the 1962 election. A hard-liner on social issues, Bustamante put a lid on the emigration scheme, resorting instead to harsher police measures to contain the simmering urban unrest.⁵⁴

In 1961 the mission had found the Pipers already in the process of transforming the Malkoda landscape. Ethiopian citizens by now, the couple lived in a modest bungalow they built themselves, ran a commercial flour mill, raised livestock, and grew corn and sunflower using modern farming techniques. A year later, when an Ethiopian journalist and a Jamaican photographer drove through Shashemene, the settlement land still consisted of the Pipers alone, the only addition being a two-room schoolhouse for the local children: the Melaku Bayen Elementary School.

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Despite a promising start, the settlement scheme would stagnate during the next several years, in part because of the lack of resources and in part because of Bustamante's avowed antirepatriation stance.⁵⁵

Diplomacy and State Visits

Until the early 1960s, the racial fascination with Ethiopia was inspired by spiritual and historical factors. When Addis Ababa became home to the UNECA and the OAU headquarters in 1958 and 1963 respectively, Ethiopia's significance took on a political dimension. Haile Selassie's revered status as the continent's elder statesman further justified Addis Ababa's role as Africa's de facto capital, making it a Mecca for ministers and heads of states.

The first New World black leader to travel to Addis Ababa in the post-OAU era was Malcolm X, a former member of the Nation of Islam. The African American nationalist made no mention of his visit to Addis Ababa in his autobiography, whereas he described in depth his meetings with various African state officials in their respective countries. Malcolm X's autobiography referred to postwar Ethiopia only in the context of his trip to Mecca.

In 1963 when Malcolm made his first pilgrimage to Islam's holiest site, he was still an obscure figure in the Arab world. In fact, he had to spend a whole day at the airport in Jidah until authorities examined and verified his documents, authenticating his conversion to Islam. In the meantime, his distress over the airport incident worsened because of the language barrier that left him incommunicado. He wrote that, when he finally saw "two black men chatting in British-accented English," he felt such a relief that he "nearly shouted" with joy. From their conversation, he learned that they were Ethiopians making the Hadj. Of the eighteen million Ethiopians, ten million were Muslims, he noted. "Most people think Ethiopia is Christian, but only its government is Christian. The West has always helped to keep the Christian government in power."⁵⁶

Malcolm's visit to Addis Ababa in October 1963 would have gone unnoticed were it not for the university students in whom he found a receptive audience. "I feel more at home among you than in America, a country which has not accepted us for three hundred years now," he lambasted American racial hypocrisy.⁵⁷ In its editorial, the major campus publication *News and Views* complimented Malcolm X as one of the greatest heroes in the fight for racial justice, adding that, "his extremely powerful voice, his excellent choice of words, but above all, the conviction and enthusiasm with which he spoke, kept all in the meeting literally spellbound."⁵⁸

Despite Malcolm's subtle hostility toward the Haile Selassie government, or perhaps because of it, the students attached great significance to his visit. His campus lecture stimulated an anti-American

discourse that gave rise to a number of militant essays. One article in particular stood out for its inflammatory language, reminiscent of Malcolm's earlier association with the Nation of Islam. In an article titled "Our God Is Black," a certain Assegede Hagos argued that blacks had long been victims of European exploitation, and that in pan-Africanism alone lay their political and economic redemption: "If the Black Angels want to leave the White Devils no place to stand on, it is by unity."⁵⁹

Prime Minister Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago, an opponent of black radicalism, followed in Malcolm X's footsteps several months later. His speech at the university had a sobering effect on the audience. The premier recounted his deep-rooted connection with Ethiopia, going as far back as his college years in England: "I would very much like to mention the resolutions passed by students in London during my school days there, in which they protested and denounced Italy's aggression of Ethiopia. I am very highly pleased to have this opportunity to visit Ethiopia."⁶⁰

An Oxford-educated historian and a prolific writer, Williams spoke of the African intelligentsia and its challenges, pointing out the impossibility of creating "African unity in the face of intellectual disunity." Referring to his own academic credentials as an authority on the transatlantic slave trade, the prime minister admitted that African scholars had done very little research on the history of Africa's colonial and precolonial pasts, and he therefore called for the cooperation between African universities in launching a common African research institution.⁶¹

In the aftermath of Williams' visit, the government of Trinidad and Tobago joined the governments of Jamaica and Haiti in opening an embassy in Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian government, perhaps for economic reasons, did not reciprocate Jamaica's and Trinidad's overtures, limiting its diplomatic representation to Haiti only.

Unlike its Anglophone neighbors with visible pro-Ethiopian feelings, Haiti offered no sociopolitical rationale for the deployment of an Ethiopian embassy. Nonetheless, a whimsical love affair between the two countries began in the late fifties when Yilma Deressa, then Ethiopia's ambassador to the United States, visited the island nation as a personal guest of President Francois Duvalier. Formal diplomatic ties followed in 1961, although the Ethiopian ambassador in Haiti, Gaitachew Bekele, still found little justification for his appointment there. In fact, unlike the capable Haitian ambassador in Addis Ababa who, among other things, lobbied successfully for a Haitian company to win a construction bid in Ethiopia, his counterpart in Port-Au-Prince thought of his posting there as tantamount to political banishment. After turning down his government's offer to reassign him either to Jamaica or to Trinidad, in 1967 Gaitachew left for Mexico, thereby bringing to end his government's short-lived diplomatic experimentation with Haiti.⁶²



Foreign Minister Ketema Yifru and Prime Minister Eric Williams, during the latter's visit to Ethiopia in March 1964

One means by which the Ethiopian government tried to pursue an active foreign policy, in the face of such limited human and financial resources, was through the role that Haile Selassie assigned to himself as his country's roving ambassador. In the same way visits to Ethiopia by foreign dignitaries raised Ethiopian awareness of the larger world, Haile Selassie's overseas sojourns sharpen Western awareness of Ethiopia. A globe-trotting statesman, the emperor knew how to reach out to black communities, even when his schedules seemed overextended with diplomatic formalities. During his first American tour in June 1954, for example, he accepted several African American invitations. While in Washington, D.C., he appeared as the guest of honor at Howard University's graduation ceremony, himself a conferee of an honorary doctoral degree. In Chicago he met in person the legendary Janet Bragg, surrogate mother to many Ethiopian students. In New York, he attended Sunday services at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, hosted by none other than Harlem's flamboyant congressman, the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.⁶³



Emperor Haile Selassie presenting gifts of religious articles to Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., congressman and Pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. Left to right: Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Haile Selassie, Manhattan Borough President Hulan Jack, Bishop R.C. Lawson, and Rev. David N. Licorish, Associate Minister of the Abyssinian Baptist Church

Subsequent visits were equally notable as far as racial outreach was concerned. In his October 1963 trip to the United States, Haile Selassie gave an exclusive interview to the Afro-American monthly *Ebony*. In it, the Lion of Judah underscored the unity of purpose between Africans and African Americans in their quest for freedom and equality, as well as mentioned his government's land provision for those seeking to settle in Ethiopia.⁶⁴ Even more forceful than the *Ebony* interview was the monarch's moving denunciation of racism and colonialism at the UN general assembly in New York. The speech, second in significance to his historic address to the League of Nations in Geneva in 1936, would provide the script for one of Bob Marley's major hits, "War," the de facto anthem of the antiwar and antiapartheid rallies of the late seventies and eighties.⁶⁵

Of all Haile Selassie's worldwide travels, his 1966 Caribbean visit stands out as the most sensational. The historic tour, which covered Trinidad, Jamaica, and Haiti respectively, began on 18 April and ended a week later on 25 April. Except in Haiti, where Haile Selassie kept his visit

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to only a few hours because of Duvalier's disregard for royal protocols,⁶⁶ everywhere else the king was met by a spontaneous and uninhibited display of warm welcome, so much so the entire occasion was profiled in a booklet by the Ethiopian ministry of information.⁶⁷

Jamaican reception surpassed that of its sister islands in pomp and circumstance, unparalleled by any similar event in the island's own history. To highlight the significance of the occasion, Bustamante's government had declared 21 April, the date of the emperor's arrival, a public holiday. As a result, the crowd at the Palisadoes International Airport numbered fifty to one hundred thousand, the largest gathering ever. For Rastafarians at the scene, the drastic weather change that accompanied the emperor's entry to Jamaica provided one more example of the Lion of Judah's supernatural powers. It had been raining profusely as the plane bearing the Ethiopian insignia approached Kingston. The Boeing 707 landed as a bright sunny sky eclipsed the torrential downpour in a synchronized gesture as if to embrace the *Negus*. So mesmerized was the crowd by the event, the *Gleaner* proclaimed, that it spontaneously exploded into such a joyous "roar" as "had never been heard at the Palisadoes before."⁶⁸

What followed was a total anarchy, which left the unprepared officials in a state of utter bewilderment and helplessness. No sooner had the plane touched down than the exuberant Rastafarian crowd broke through the police line and charged into the airport terminal, shouting biblical praises and pan-African slogans. The plane remained besieged until Mortimer Planno, a respected Rastafarian elder and member of the 1961 fact-finding mission to Ethiopia, climbed on a platform and pleaded with the crowd to roll back. Because of the pandemonium, the special red-carpet reception was cancelled and the diminutive King of Kings whisked out of the airport under tight security. All the same, the procession was dubbed as "a welcome of superlatives" by the *Daily Gleaner*: "There never has been in the whole history of Jamaica such a spontaneous heart-warming and sincere welcome to any person--whether visiting monarch, visiting V.I.P., or returning leader of any Jamaican party." The emperor's reaction to the occasion was equally extraordinary. "The tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his face," the paper observed, adding: "It will perhaps never be known whether he cried in sorrow at the uncontrollableness of the vast throng of Jamaicans who had gathered to meet him, or out of pure joy; but whatever it was, it was an emotional reaction to a highly emotional welcome."⁶⁹

During his three-day stay in Jamaica, the seventy-four-year-old statesman maintained a very busy schedule, from addressing the joint houses of parliament to placing the cornerstone for a would-be Haile Selassie Secondary School in Kingston. He conferred with a group of Rastafarian elders and, to the surprise of those who remembered Garvey's

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biting editorials against him decades earlier, laid a bouquet of flowers at the statue of the slain national hero.⁷⁰

Haile Selassie's travels in the Caribbean had a multifold impact. First, the imperial visit catapulted the Sufferers and their cause into "unprecedented" national and international spotlight. "Jamaicans greeted the royal personage with such enthusiasm that devotion to Ethiopia, qua Africa, and to Selassie rivaled, and appeared to threaten, the rising Jamaican nationalism and patriotism," notes Nathaniel Murrell. Such was the extent of the pro-Ethiopian loyalty that, several weeks after the royal visit, a member of the Jamaican Senate tabled a motion pushing for the recognition of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia instead of Queen Elizabeth of England as the constitutional monarch of Jamaica.⁷¹

Second, incidents such as the drastic weather change that surrounded the Power of Trinity's arrival at Palisadoes reinforced the monarch's aura of divinity, giving rise to various legends. Rita Marley, who until then sang in a church choir and taught Sunday school, became an instant convert to the millenarian faith after claiming to have seen the "Holy Stigmata," marks of the crucifixion, in Haile Selassie's palms. Other Rastas spoke of the Elect of God having presented Donald Sanghster, the acting prime minister in lieu of the aging Bustamante, with a miniature coffin in the form of a gilded cigarette case, and connected that with Sanghster's subsequent death of cancer.⁷²

Finally, the king's visit made it clear that Ethiopia was no longer a mere abstraction, remote and unreachable. Until 1966 only a handful of Jamaicans had ventured to Ethiopia. After the historic visit, the number of Rastafarian immigrants in Shashemene would multiply, rising to three or four dozens by the early 1970s. However distant and demographically insignificant, the emigré community in Shashemene would henceforth become an important reference point in Jamaica's party politics. In February 1969, Prime Minister Hughes Shearer visited the settlement site in Shashemene; and, not to be outdone in the eyes of the masses, his political opponent, Michael Manley, would make a similar pilgrimage some months later.⁷³

Shashemene after 1966

In the aftermath of Haile Selassie's visit to the Caribbean, a slow but steady trickle to Shashemene began, some of it from Britain and the rest directly from the West Indies. In its 17 July 1971 issue, the *Daily Gleaner* featured an article on the Promised Land accompanied by pictures of the settlement site. Inspired by such favorable reports, repatriation efforts reached a fever pitch in the early seventies. The EWF branch in Kingston, local 15, whose members included some university students, sent petitions to the government and United Nations, soliciting financial and political support for its Zionist cause. Contact was established between local 15

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and the EWF branch in Chicago to explore the possibility of negotiating for an additional land grant, and in September 1972 the former succeeded in sending one of its members to Ethiopia. Some months later, in February 1973, a newspaper advertisement appeared in the *Jamaican Weekend Star* describing an ongoing census project and encouraging prospective immigrants to register so as to give their cause more political weight.⁷⁴

Events in Shashemene were, in the meantime, taking a radically different course. As more immigrants arrived and the homestead expanded, tensions arose between the Pipers and the newcomers. The former were accused of heavy-handed rule, of deliberately discouraging potential pioneers from coming, and of expropriating communal facilities such as the overseas-donated tractor for exclusive personal use. In 1967 Gladstone Robinson, one of the newcomers, replaced James Piper as the administrator of the settlement, and three years later the land was officially divided among twelve pioneer families, 2.2 hectares per household. The Pipers continued to own the remaining portion of the estate with the understanding that they were to relinquish more plots as additional immigrants arrived.⁷⁵

The repatriation scheme suffered its worst setback in the aftermath of the 1974 revolution. The existence of the settler community had long been associated with the emperor and his good will. The new antimonarchical regime not only ordered the expulsion of Mr. Robinson, the head of the homesteaders, but had most of their settlement and property nationalized. The community continued to deteriorate as those with resources departed, including the Montserratian couple who returned to New York.⁷⁶

What saved the settlement from extinction was the arrival of a new group of Rastafarians that called itself the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Founded in 1968 by Vernon Carrington, a former street vendor, the Twelve Tribes was a centrally organized, middle-class Rastafarian sect, with which many well-known reggae artists had close associations.⁷⁷

The first group of Twelve Tribes arrived in Shashemene in 1972, more following in the next several years. Because of better financial resources, members of the Twelve Tribes introduced a visible change in Malkoda's material culture. Earlier EWF pioneers dwelled in simple, ramshackle structures, while the newcomers constructed well-furnished brick houses. Because of their rural background, the EWF settlers generally lived off the land as subsistence farmers, whereas the Twelve Tribes made their living as shopkeepers and artisans, and in so doing blended more smoothly into the local urban culture. Many members of the Twelve Tribes migrated as families, which helped them keep a stronger sense of community. According to one estimate, the Twelve Tribes numbered close to 120, two-thirds of them locally born. The EWF, by contrast, had twenty-six members only, half of them living outside Shashemene.⁷⁸

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The land grant community was first introduced to non-Rastafarians by a British writer, Derek Bishton, whose *Blackheart Man* presented a brief but fascinating account of his stay with the homesteaders. Bishton's interview with some of the pioneers gave the once obscure community faces and voices. For example, there was the striking story of Noel Dyer, who walked and hitchhiked his way from London to Ethiopia. A Jamaican of rural background, Dyer left London for the same reason many other Rastas left Europe and America: the lure of the Promised Land. He arrived in Shashemene after a year-long breathtaking odyssey through France, the Maghreb, Egypt, and the Sudan, where he was briefly detained for an unlawful border crossing.⁷⁹

Bishton's account put an otherwise obscure Rift Valley hamlet on the map. It turned the backwater district, better known for its volcanic lakes and its variety of birds, into a source of sociological curiosity. Breathtaking stories like that of Dyer have captured the imagination of international tourists, researchers, journalists, and the BBC film crew, whose television documentary on Malkoda is perhaps the only one of its kind.

The picture of West Indians in Ethiopia is far from rosy however. As the homesteaders grew in number, so did the magnitude of their social malaise. Since almost all the earlier pioneers were men, sexual tension was one obvious byproduct. One of the few female immigrants, for instance, had the misfortune of being attacked by a machete-wielding rapist, leaving her with a severed right arm.⁸⁰ In 1982, likewise, fourteen members of the Twelve Tribes were arrested on charges of drug smuggling, eight of them taken to the capital to stand trial.⁸¹

For a community with an increasing image problem, a scandal like this was the last thing it needed. Before the land grant arrangement, Malkoda was a personal estate of the emperor. That did not however prevent the local Oromo farmers from seizing the land following the 1975 land reform proclamation. The Derg finally returned a portion of the land to its foreign occupants, but the locals continued to resent the presence of what they saw was a relatively privileged settler class.

According to Horace Campbell, one of a handful West Indian scholars to visit Shashemene, the Rastafarians were in part to blame for the discord between them and the locals. The Marxist Campbell argues that the West Indians did not understand the anti-imperial and revolutionary fervor of the landless peasantry. The Rastas had naively interpreted their loyalty to the king as loyalty to the country, a distortion of Ethiopian patriotism. By publicly displaying pictures of the deposed monarch, the Sufferers showed their insensitivity toward their neighbors' feelings. Thus, a movement begun in Jamaica as a social revolt against capitalistic exploitation turned, after transplantation in Ethiopia, degenerate and retrogressive.⁸²

A more serious setback to the settler community, worse than its friction with the locals or the government, has been its own internal division.

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What began as a clash of leadership between the Pipers and the others in the sixties took the form of factional rivalry after the mid-seventies. The EWF members, who saw themselves as the rightful custodians of the land grant, considered the Twelve Tribes as interlopers; while the latter accused the EWF of having done little to develop the settlement. Consequently, there has been little interaction between the two, social or otherwise. In 1987 Vernon Carrington, the Kingston-based leader of the Twelve Tribes, went to Shashemene with fifty prospective settlers. Carrington and the EWF representatives met in person and tried to iron out their differences but to no avail. The EWF, to whom much of the settlement site still belonged, rejected Carrington's scheme of expansion, and the newcomers were subsequently resettled in Ghana.⁸³

Repatriation as Spiritual Sojourn

According to Joseph Owens, the process of repatriation has three layers: cultural, physical, and messianic. Return to Africa in the physical sense and the embrace of African cultural identity were reminiscent of Garvey's back-to-Africa endeavor. Garveyism, however, ran contrary to Rastafarian understanding of repatriation as a divinely inspired process. Unlike those who trickled into Ethiopia a few at a time, most Rastafarians expected en masse migration. Moreover, since the manner and time of such exodus depended on God's plan, Rastafarians objected to self-initiated departure as a subversion of providential design. "In the first place, such action would evince despair of God's saving power," states Owens, "and, furthermore, one could not hope to be any more than an immigrant in such a procedure."⁸⁴

If, logistics aside, commitment to providential deliberation explains why only a relatively small number of the Sufferers repatriated in the sixties and seventies, political and practical considerations served as deterrent factors in subsequent decades. The hoisting of Derg to power and the distinction it created between church and state contradicted the believers' notion of Ethiopia as a theocratic kingdom or the new Zion. When the media reported the death of the imprisoned emperor in August 1975, some Rastas concluded altogether that Haile Selassie did not represent the second coming of Christ, but only his human manifestation. With this, they abandoned their eschatological preoccupation, explaining their loyalty to Rastafari in terms of its pan-African dimension only.

Thus, the erosion of Ethiopia's millennial significance has caused much rethinking even among hard-core Rastafarians. The motto that "repatriation is a must" and "Babylon is foreign" is no longer taken literally. Travels through the less developed parts of the world have made Rastas aware that African countries, including Ethiopia, are not immune to the types of social evils that have plagued the capitalist West. Furthermore, since the Malkoda experiment has shown the impracticality

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of wholesale migration, repatriation is increasingly seen as a process of psychological transformation. Ethiopia is now as much a state of mind as it is a spot on the map, symbolizing cultural reorientation and spiritual sojourn into the past.⁸⁵

One means by which such psychological rebirth has been made possible is through conversion to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It has been a half century since the EOC has established branches throughout the West Indies. The EOC is seen by the Sufferers as filling a cultural void created by centuries of slavery and forced separation from Africa, and as such provides a unique sociocultural and religious context for those trying to reconnect with their ancestral past. Even to diehard Rasta loyalists, for whom Haile Selassie's divinity is non-negotiable, the church still holds a positive meaning because of its image as a repository of ancient wisdom and history. Offering of Amharic classes, issuing of Ethiopian baptismal names, celebrating of Ethiopian holidays such as the New Year and Epiphany, are but a few reasons why many Sufferers feel socially drawn to the Apostolic Church.

The concept of repatriation as a spiritual odyssey is perhaps best exemplified by Bob Marley, the renowned reggae artist. In 1979 the Jamaican singer visited Shashemene in quest of a genuine Ethiopian experience and a year later was baptized into the EOC as Berhane-Selassie (light of the Trinity) by the New York-based Abuna Yeseshaq. During his Ethiopian visit, Marley tried to stage a benefit concert for children's charity, but the effort was thwarted by the security-conscious Marxist government. While Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 provided the venue for Marley's historic concert in Africa, his hope to perform on stage with Ethiopian musicians was made real posthumously through the efforts of his children and his wife. Ziggy and the Melody Makers, as the Marleys' new band came to be known, would team up with the Chicago-based Ethiopian Dallol Band for a number of memorable albums in the late eighties and early nineties.⁸⁶

Initially, Marley's conversion to Monophysitism was not publicized for fear of alienating reggae fans and Rastafarian brethren. But when the Trenchtown icon died of cancer in early 1981 at the age of thirty-six, his funeral service, in an open manifestation of his embrace of Orthodoxy, was conducted by Ethiopian priests. Marley's entire family members (his wife Rita, his children, and their grandmother Cedella) have since openly associated with the Ethiopian church. Rita Marley, or Mendere-Genet, would in fact emerge as a major financial benefactress in the construction of the Holy Trinity Church on Maxfield Road, where her first-born Ziggy grew up serving as an altar boy, donating over \$5000 for the installation of the church-owned bakery.⁸⁷

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tewahedo in the west

As the previous chapter has shown, there had been a sporadic trickle of West Indians to Ethiopia as visitors, sojourners, and immigrants since the thirties. Similarly, over the last several decades Ethiopia has become ever more conspicuous in Caribbean popular culture, from the adoption of Amharic words into reggae to the incorporation of the green-gold-red tricolor in day-to-day Rastafarian lives. Ethiopian symbolism in Rastafarian thought is a relatively well-mined subject and is not the focus of this chapter. Of interest here is the religious scope of the Ethiopian-Caribbean ties, particularly the transplantation process of Monophysitism among diasporan blacks.

Since the 1941 publication of Melville Herskovits' seminal work *The Myth of the Negro Past*, there has been a growing body of literature dealing with the African antecedents of New World black cultures. For the last six decades, historians and anthropologists have demonstrated African manifestations in New World black art, music, language, and religion. Despite this ever increasing interest in the study of African continuities, the research on Africanisms remains wanting in two key areas. First, the study on African crossovers focuses exclusively on the transatlantic slave trade period, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. As a result, contemporary African contribution to New World cultures has been ignored. Second, investigation into New World African survivals has been based on West African influences. Because of geographic bias, research on the possibility of further transoceanic cultural contacts outside the West African paradigm has been nonexistent.

These points in mind, a study of "modern Ethiopianism" adds a new angle to the scholarship on African continuities. First, it shifts the focus on the discussion of Africanisms from West Africa to East Africa, thereby widening the geographic dimension of the discourse. Second, it reveals the ongoing cultural encounters between the two continents, thereby demonstrating that African carryovers to the West are as dynamic today as they had been in the days of the heinous transatlantic slave trade.

Ethiopia and Afro-Christianity

Ethiopian tradition traces the introduction of Christianity in northeast Africa to the first century, perhaps to the fourth or fifth decade after the birth of Christ. The origin of this folklore lends itself to the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40), in which an Ethiopian eunuch is portrayed as black Africa's first convert to Christianity. While on a visit to Jerusalem, the eunuch, a high-ranking officer in the court of Queen Candace, met Philip the Apostle through whom he received the good news and was baptized. A changed man, the officer would return to Ethiopia and through him Christianity would override Judaism as the official religion.

The consensus among historians is that Christianity entered what is now northern Ethiopia in the middle of the fourth century. Traders and travelers were the more probable agents of the new religion, but conventional sources credit two ship-wrecked Syrian youths, Aedissius and Frumentius, as having introduced Christianity to the Axumite court. Frumentius, later *Abuna* Salama, traveled to the Holy See of St. Mark in Alexandria, where he was consecrated as bishop and sent back to Axum as the head of the budding church.

According to ecclesiastical folklore, the fledgling church received a major boost at the close of the fifth century when religious refugees from Syria, the "nine saints," came to Axum as missionaries. The saints, or *Tsadkan*, as they were known locally, proselytized widely, built churches, and, most importantly, translated the Antioch version of the Bible into Ge'ez. A reason for the monks' persecution by the Syrian authority lay in their rejection of the Chalcedonian creed. The Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.) defined Christ "as perfect God and man, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with Man, one sole being in two natures, without division or separation and without confusion or change." The refugees, on the other hand, remained steadfast to the Monophysite dogma that subscribed to the single nature in Christ, Christ the human subsumed in Christ the Divine, a view championed by the Alexandrian church.¹

Monophysitism, or *Tewahedo* in Ge'ez, not only continued to spread southward through subsequent centuries, it also went through a gradual process of nativization. The church became Africanized as a result of its syncretistic accommodation of indigenous traditions, not least of which was the canonization of Ethiopians as martyrs and saints. According to Jan Schalkwick, a professor in comparative religion, the Ethiopian church was "indigenized in the African context, expressing itself in the rhythmic beat of the prayer sticks, the liturgical dance of the priests, the drums and hand-clapping, the indigenous round shape of many Southern African church buildings, the outdoor services, the place of angels and spirits, the struggle against demons, magic, sorcerers, and polygamy, the emphasis on church marriage, the sacrament of healing, and exorcism."²

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Some of these features, namely the prayer stick and the liturgical dance, are practices more reminiscent of ancient Judaism than of traditional Africa. Yet, the drum, the hand-clapping, polygamy, the acknowledgment of malevolent and capricious spirits, ancestor veneration, and the cult of spirit possession, as well as the practice of situating church shrines in remote, almost inaccessible wooded grounds, attest to the synergistic essence of Ethiopian Christianity.

Despite the indigenous characteristics of the Tewahedo faith, its leadership at the highest level remained obeisant to the Egyptian Coptic Church for almost sixteen hundred years. Since the Alexandrian appointment of the Syrian-born Abuna Salama as the first Axumite metropolitan or archbishop, a precedent had been set, placing the Ethiopian church under Egyptian jurisdiction. The practice had two unforeseen consequences. First, upon the death of the metropolitan in Ethiopia, it took years before a successor was dispatched from Egypt, especially in times of tensions between the two countries. Second, since the foreign-born bishop spoke neither Ge'ez nor Amharic, he did not fully partake in church rituals and festivities, nor could he appreciate the depth and meaning of such occasions. Given his obvious handicap in such practical matters, the actual administrative responsibility lay on the *Echage*, the head priest at Debra-Lebanos, Ethiopia's leading monastic center.³

The Egyptian metropolitan, although mostly a figurehead, remained very powerful, theoretically more powerful than the monarch, for he had the authority to excommunicate. Naturally, the investiture of such absolute power in a foreign cleric went against the spirit of national independence. Since the 1860s Ethiopian leaders had tried to scale down Alexandria's religious foothold, only to discover they were fighting against a time-honored bilateral tradition. In 1929, after three years of negotiations between Ras Tefari and the Alexandria-based Holy Synod, a group of monks traveled to Egypt and made history as the first Ethiopians to be consecrated as bishops. The concession did not alter the status quo however. Not only did ultimate power still rest with the Egyptian metropolitan, but as a prerequisite for their appointment the Ethiopian bishops had to swear an oath recognizing Coptic supremacy.⁴

Only a few years after this development, Ethiopia fell under Italian rule. Italian religious policy also focused on getting autochthony for the Ethiopian church, of course not out of altruism, but rather to facilitate Rome's overseas hegemony. To that effect, Abuna Qerilos, the Egyptian metropolitan in Addis Ababa, not only failed to condemn the 1935 fascist aggression, whose martyred victims included bishops and priests, but he also traveled to Rome to discuss the fate of the Ethiopian church with Mussolini. Afterwards, while Qerilos was temporarily back in Egypt, Mussolini would decide to take matters into his hands. As the Italian

consul in Cairo deliberately dragged his feet to delay Qerilos' return to the Horn indefinitely, the Italian leadership proceeded to declare the autocephaly of the Ethiopian church by appointing six new bishops, among them the metropolitan Abuna Abraham. Alexandria naturally condemned the schism as uncanonical and excommunicated the bishops, but the edict had little practical effect.⁵

The status quo ante prevailed after the war with the renewal of relations between Ethiopia and Alexandria. At the same time, the newly restored Ethiopian government entered into protracted negotiation with Egypt over the future of its Church. Driven by the ongoing nationalist momentum, Haile Selassie requested that the Ethiopian church be granted an autocephalic status. Initially, the proposal met stiff opposition in Alexandria; but given the Ethiopian government's threat to act unilaterally, the latter had to soften its stance. In 1948 five Ethiopians were appointed as bishops, among them the Echage Gebre-Giorgis who, three years later, was recognized as Metropolitan or Archbishop Basilios. Finally, Alexandria's consent to the elevation of Basilios to the patriarchy in 1959 bequeathed total independence, paving the way for the 1971 election of Theophilos as the new primate by the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa.⁶

Religion and Foreign Policy

On the Ethiopian side, the predisposing factors for the transplantation of Tewahedo in the West were more political than religious, at least in the initial stage. As one of few African countries least affected by colonialism, Ethiopia had been slow to develop a panblack racial consciousness. What finally galvanized Ethiopia's social and psychological integration with the continent was Haile Selassie's multipronged Africa-oriented policy as discussed in chapter 6. Similarly, foreign policy considerations dictated EOC's overseas expansion. Proponents saw in African Orthodoxy a cultural bridge to black America and the West Indies, the political rationale being the promotion of Ethiopian influence abroad.

Beginning with 1948, the year that Ethiopia joined the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a founding member, expansion and ecumenism characterized Ethiopian church leadership. The mastermind behind this growing involvement in international Christian brotherhood was Abuna Theophilos, the most influential church leader in twentieth-century Ethiopia. Born in the province of Gojam around 1910, Meliktu Wolde-Mariam, later Archbishop and then Patriarch Theophilos, grew up in Addis Ababa, where he distinguished himself as a gifted religious scholar. In 1948 the thirty-eight-year-old Meliktu was raised to the level of bishop in charge of the eastern province of Hararge, the emperor's birthplace, and in the same year took his first trip abroad as a delegate to the WCC conference in Amsterdam. In subsequent decades, Theophilos became a well-traveled figure, attending major international gatherings and serving

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twice as one of the three presidents of the All African Conference of Churches.⁷

If Haile Selassie sought to transform Addis Ababa into Africa's political capital, Theophilos likewise endeavored to make Ethiopia the continent's spiritual center. In January 1971 Ethiopia hosted the WCC's twenty-third central committee annual meeting. Theophilos, then the acting patriarch, used the ecumenical platform to advance Africa's anticolonial cause, his opening speech setting the tone of the conference:

In meeting on the African continent there are certain problems that automatically loom large on the Committee's horizon: problems relating to questions of human dignity, justice and freedom, problems that no sincere Christian can afford to ignore. In raising these issues, I should make it clear that, as Christians of Africa, our concern is for justice for all people, irrespective of race, color or creed. The dehumanizing factors to which people are subjected by means of poverty and backwardness, on the one hand, and discrimination based on race, color or creed, on the other, are indeed against the teachings of Christ and the faith of the church. Every effort should be made, therefore, to eradicate them. We hope that the present meeting of the central committee of the World Council of Churches will put its considerable weight on the side of the oppressed peoples of this continent, and help heal the wounds that still continue to bleed.⁸

The WCC conference in Addis Ababa, the first to be held in an African capital, marked the beginning of a positive dialogue between the world church body and the various anticolonial struggles. The assembly was particularly significant for its deliberation on pertinent issues such as apartheid, institutional racism, and North-South economic disparity.⁹ The gathering's major longterm impact lay in its recognition of armed struggle as an inevitable course of resistance against evil, especially in totalitarian regimes where nonviolent forms of protest were simply impossible. In a carefully argued subsequent publication, the WCC upheld the right to resort to arms for a just cause as long as all peaceful options had been tried and failed. This provided the philosophical underpinning by which the various anticolonial movements in southern Africa, particularly the African National Congress (ANC) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) were able to muster financial and political support among religious groups in the West.¹⁰

Ethiopianism and Liberation Theology

If pan-Africanism and internationalism explain Ethiopia's interest in Tewahedo's overseas expansion, on the Caribbean side the coming of the EOC can be understood as having resulted from a dialectical interplay between oppression and resistance. During and after slavery,

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New World blacks looked to the Bible on the one hand as a source of spiritual inspiration, and to Africa on the other as a source of ancestral pride. Connected with this latter view was the concept of Ethiopianism: the realization of Ethiopia as an ancient Christian polity; the regard of the country as the cradle of human civilization; and the appreciation of its victory over Italy at Adwa as a symbol of African military prowess. Because of Ethiopia's special place in the scriptures and because of its aura as Africa's oldest independent nation, Africa-minded West Indians saw the apostolic Church as the institutional embodiment of race pride and spiritual fulfillment. For those blacks who bore the brunt of colonial racism and class discrimination, Ethiopianism therefore constituted a liberation theology, an ideology of resistance against political domination as well as a blueprint for religious and cultural self-revival.¹¹

Although the name Ethiopia, according to nineteenth-century appellation, referred to Africa as a whole, there is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that some of the well-educated antebellum blacks knew about East Africa and its indigenous form of Christianity. One of the oldest black churches in North America ascribes its origins to such intercontinental interactions. Legend has it that the Abyssinian Baptist Church was founded by a group of "Abyssinian or Ethiopian traders" in New York who, in reaction to the white churches' discriminatory practices, decided to form their own house of worship. Led by the Rev. Thomas Paul of Boston, in 1809 they established one of the first independent black religious institutions in Manhattan: the Abyssinian Baptist Church.¹²

There is no corroborative account of northeast Africans coming to the Americas as slaves let alone as merchants. The above story must have therefore emerged from the urge to lend legitimacy to the Baptists' claim of being the first African-oriented church in the United States, in name as well as in fact. Even if the aforementioned account is a recent embellishment, adoption of the name "Abyssinian" by the Baptists implies that some educated blacks not only knew about Ethiopia's homegrown Christianity but may even have used it to counter the pervasive stereotype of Africans as "heathen" and primitive.

Edward Wilmot Blyden, the eminent Caribbean-born pan-Africanist and one of the thousands of immigrants to Liberia, was the first black thinker to write on the Ethiopian church. Blyden's exposition on Ethiopia, "Philip and the Eunuch," appeared in his collection of essays *Islam, Christianity and the Negro Race*, first published in 1888. In this work Blyden condemned the use of white missionaries in Africa as culturally and psychologically counterproductive. Western evangelists, he argued, inculcated European values and virtues that ran contrary to African traditions.

Given his disenchantment with European evangelism, the Caribbean scholar turned to Tewahedo in search of a homegrown and authentically

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African religious institution. "It is a curious fact that historians, in speaking of the African Church, seldom mean by that phrase the Abyssinian Church, which is far more entitled to that description than any other." The encounter in the Holy Land between the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip the apostle was not only divinely inspired, Blyden contended, it created the setting for the introduction of the new faith to Africa by an African. The newly baptized court official returned to Ethiopia bearing the new gospel, and with that Christianity eventually grew into an indigenous institution. "The Abyssinian Church is the only real African church yet founded whose priests and people are all of the African race," Blyden concluded.¹³

Ethiopianist themes proliferated in the post-adwa decades, especially in the 1910s and 1920s. One such example was the African Orthodox Church, formed in New York in 1921 by George Alexander Mcguire. A native of St. Croix in the West Indies, Bishop Mcguire had worked closely with Garvey in his role as the official chaplain of the UNIA. Garvey, a devout Catholic, found Mcguire's promotion of a particular strand of religious nationalism rather divisive to UNIA's eclectic following and chose to remain noncommittal. Still, not only did Mcguire draw his membership from the UNIA rank and file, but the branch proved popular enough to have followers overseas, particularly in southern and eastern Africa.

The patriarchate in northeastern Africa was the more probable inspiration for the advent of the African Orthodox Church, but physical distance and lack of information demanded that Mcguire be ordained by an independent Catholic prelate, Fr. Joseph Rene Vilatte. In form, the African Orthodox Church resembled the Anglican church, the denomination in which Mcguire first received his calling to the priesthood. In substance and aspiration, African Orthodoxy symbolized a break from Western Christendom. As the name implies, the diocese reveled in its proximity to the Eastern church, seeing itself in league with what Blyden had remarked were the unique trademarks of the Ethiopian church: independence and self-pride.

Even if one regards the African Orthodox Church as little more than a remote archetype of the Tewahedo creed in the New World, it is only in the post-Italian period that the religious connection between Ethiopia and diasporan blacks becomes readily apparent. The overall response to the Italo-Ethiopian war, religious and secular, is discussed in chapter three and does not warrant repeating here. While the war gave rise to a sense of pan-African racial solidarity, it also deepened the cynicism toward the established churches or Euro-Christianity. Such disenchantment with conventional denominations would in turn create fertile ground for the revival and expansion of African-centered religious sects.

In Jamaica, the Rastafarian sect had first appeared in 1930 following the crowning of Ras Tefari Makonnen as Emperor Haile Selassie.

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Initially, the Rastafarians depended on scriptural heremeneutics for their interpretation of Haile Selassie's coronation as that of the second coming. After 1935, more Jamaicans joined the growing messianic sect to protest the conspiratorial silence of Pope Pius XI. Italy's subsequent ejection from Ethiopia in 1941 would similarly solidify the ranks of Rastafari, for followers of Haile Selassie interpreted the defeat of Mussolini as the defeat of the "beast" as forewarned in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation. Decades later, Rastafarianism would emerge as a major sociocultural force to be reckoned with in its own right, serving as the main impetus behind the transplanting of another Africa-oriented religious institution, namely that of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Like their Jamaican counterparts, many Trinidadians saw the war in millenarian terms: the forces of evil versus the forces of righteousness. Haile Selassie was seen by some as a prophet if not as divine, while the pope, in league with Mussolini and Hitler, bore the image of the false Messiah and his false prophets. In response to this prevailing anti-Catholic and anti-European atmosphere, the war brought about a quick revival of Africa-oriented religions, among them Orisha and the Spiritual Baptists.¹⁴

Since slaves had always greatly outnumbered white settlers, there had always been an overt African cultural presence in the West Indies. Even with the systematic assimilation of blacks into Christianity, certain African cultural institutions continued to operate in reinterpreted forms: Vodun in Haiti, Kumina in Jamaica, Santeria in Cuba, Shango or Orisha in Trinidad. The last, according to George Simpson's classic study, was based on the worship of a pantheon of Yoruba deities of which Shango, god of thunder and lightening, was one of a dozen. While retaining its original Yoruban structure, New World Orisha incorporated Catholic saints and angels into its multitude of supernatural beings. It also combined traditional practices of healing and conjuration with elements of Christianity, including the use of the Bible for purposes of divination.¹⁵

Official proscriptions and Western influence gradually undermined the popularity of Orisha and its pantheon. Most of its followers found refuge among the Spiritual Baptists, a syncretistic sect that combined Pentecostal Christianity with traditional practices such as attending covert Shango meetings. Known as Shouters, because of their emotional and spontaneous style of worship, the Spiritual Baptists were often shunned or stigmatized, their religious practices associated with the underground occult. Some of the Shango carryovers to the Shouters comprised the tradition of spirit possession, various water rituals including baptism and head washing, animal sacrifice, and attaching great importance to dreams and divination.¹⁶ As one informant recounted to Simpson, "You can be a Baptist, a Spiritual Baptist, and believe in Orisha work. You can be a Catholic and believe in Orisha work. But the Catholics turn you out if they

find out you are Orisha. The Spiritual Baptists don't care if you go to an Orisha work.'"¹⁷

Accused of dabbling in the malevolent practices of witchcraft and Obeah (black magic), Spiritual Baptists and Orisha were forced to go underground by the 1917 Shouters Prohibition Ordinance and the 1921 Summary Conviction Offences Ordinance. In the aftermath of the 1935 fascist aggression, these covert institutions came out into the open in bold defiance of colonial legislation. On one occasion, about two hundred Afro-Trinidadians took part in an African religious ritual involving the sacrifice of several animals, in order to tap into the powers of the deities and make them amenable to Ethiopia. Such incidents contravened the aforementioned colonial decrees, whose list of banned activities included public drumming and the work of Obeah.¹⁸

Open courting of such ancestral rituals reinforced the rebellious mood of the late thirties, representing a heightened sense of racial self-awareness. The revival of the African-oriented sects when Trinidad, like the rest of the West Indies, was in the midst of a major labor throe, also underscored the intimate linkage between anticolonial nationalism and the desire for religious and cultural self-assertion. The Italo-Ethiopian war can, in this regard, be seen as having revitalized certain religious crossovers, Africanisms, which had hitherto lain dormant, subsumed by secular culture. By striking a note of racial patriotism and by casting serious doubts on the moral basis of Euro-Christianity, the war thus created a conducive atmosphere for the subsequent introduction of Ethiopian Christianity to Trinidad and Tobago, and from there to the various English-speaking Caribbean islands.

The Ethiopian Coptic Church

In the mid-1920s, while at the peak of his popularity in the United States, Marcus Garvey was jailed on charges of mail fraud and then deported to Jamaica. While deportation plunged Garveyism in North America into a downward course, in parts of the West Indies Garvey would continue to enjoy soaring popularity for at least another decade. Cuba, home to a large Jamaican emigre community, topped the list with fifty-two branches or locals, followed by Panama with forty-seven, and Trinidad and Tobago with thirty.¹⁹

In Trinidad and Tobago, the UNIA found its greatest number of recruits among the Spiritual Baptists and the practitioners of Orisha, for whom the teachings of Garvey were congruent with their Africa-centered beliefs. Having been drawn ever closer to Ethiopia through their involvement in the antifascist campaign, these Africa-minded Garveyites would in turn constitute the first initiates into the Tewahedo faith once the religious links with the EOC were formalized. As Trevor Millett states, "almost all those who worked to bring the church to Trinidad and Tobago



The first committee of the then known Ethiopian Coptic Church that pioneered the coming of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on 16 December 1952. Front row, from left to right: Mary Joseph, Davidson Kwati Arthur (Mar Lukas), and Mary Ford. Back row: Frederick Lamy, Alfonzo Adams, George Meyers, David Modeste, Edward Bartholomew, Garnet Springer, Theophilos Donawah, Utnee Huggins, and Clifford Huggins

were Garveyites. Garveyism gave them a certain mind-set and certain distinctive attitudes."²⁰

One of the various Garveyite circles that surfaced in Trinidad in the aftermath of World War II was the Universal African Pioneering Association (UAPA). Formed in 1947 by David Modeste and Garnet Springer, president and vice president respectively, the UAPA began as a splinter group from the UNIA under a more ambitious and younger leadership.

Like their Ethiopianist predecessors, Modeste and Springer turned to the racially redemptive texts in the Bible, which they then combined with temporal themes in order to equip their movement with a nationalistic platform. Ethiopia's liberation from the five years of enemy occupation still fresh in their memory, they and their followers found the famous verse in Psalm 68 both timely and prophetic. After all, the most populous nonwhite nation, India, had just gained independence, preceded by the decolonization of Indonesia two years earlier. The superimposition of a Jewish state on Palestinian land in 1948 may have raised serious concerns among secular pan-Africanists, but many of the faithful saw Israel's ingathering as ushering in the long-awaited millennium. Relevant scriptural exegeses were thus read with special emphasis in connection

with world politics as proof that God was on the side of the oppressed and as a reminder of Africa's imminent rise to glory.²¹

Modeste and Springer were later joined by a certain Davidson Kwati Arthur of Nigeria, who, in his correspondence with the UAPA, had identified himself as Bishop Mar Lukas of the Ethiopian Coptic Church. According to Springer, who would later become a close confidant of the West African, Mar Lukas was a Ghanaian by birth but had traveled widely in West Africa and the Middle East as a religious mystic. An Anglican by upbringing, the Ghanaian had allegedly converted to Islam and made a pilgrimage to Mecca. On the way back home, he was stranded in Egypt, where he spent some time studying the rituals and customs of the Coptic church. After returning to West Africa, conceivably in the midst of the Italo-Ethiopian war, Mar Lukas settled in Nigeria where he founded the Ethiopian Coptic Church (ECC). Perhaps through the African Orthodox Church or through the UNIA headquarters in New York, with whom Davidson Kwati Arthur had been in communication, the UAPA came to learn of the West African priest and decided to invite him to serve as its spiritual mentor.²²

With little prior knowledge about the dogma of Ethiopian Christianity, and because of the strong desire to connect with Africa, few questioned the authenticity of Arthur's credentials nor found suspect his use of the word *Coptic*, the name of the Egyptian church. To the contrary, the coming of Mar Lukas and his magnetic personality transformed the UAPA into a fast-growing religious sect with branches in Tobago and British Guyana. The absence of a clear-cut distinction between the secular and the sacred is a common feature that Africa-centered social and political movements share in common. In the case of the UAPA, which started out as a religiopolitical movement, its nationalist agenda was gradually compromised by Mar Lukas' missionary zeal, hence its sectarian character.²³

Of equally fortuitous significance in connection with the coming of Mar Lukas and the establishment of the Coptic order was the 1951 visit to Trinidad and Tobago and to Guyana by a prominent Ethiopian. Father Gebre-Yesus Hailu was on a diplomatic mission in New York when Springer and his associates read about him in one of the newspapers, possibly the *Caribe Herald*, a local publication that often reprinted news dispatches from Sylvia Pankhurst's *New Times and Ethiopian News*. Italian-educated and Eritrean-born, Dr. Gebre-Yesus Hailu was a Rome-based Catholic priest who also doubled as a leading lobbyist for Eritrean unification with Ethiopia, which was in fact the reason for his being in New York that year. Believing from his name and title that the father was an Orthodox priest of royal birth, the Trinidadians scraped resources and sent him a paid invitation.²⁴

Hailu's subsequent visit boosted the morale of the ECC rank-and-file who thought the princely visit would transpire into an official tie with the

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African patriarchy. When nothing came forth of Hailu's promise to help forge these close connections, the West Indians decided to send two of their own as emissaries to Ethiopia. Equipped with a letter of introduction from Ras Imru, the Ethiopian ambassador in Washington, Springer and Mar Lukas arrived in Addis Ababa on 6 August 1952. If Springer and Mar Lukas counted on divine providence, given their own meager resources, for their sojourn half-way around the globe, they were not disappointed. Because of the uniqueness of their mission, the Ethiopian foreign ministry received them as special guests, hosting them at the Itege Hotel, with a chauffeur-driven Jeep at their disposal.²⁵

Their first acquaintances in the capital included members of the small West Indian community, among them the educator Mignon Ford and the journalist David Talbot. "His Eminence, Most Excellency Rev. Dr. Mar Monsignor Lukas and his Chaplain the Rev. Springer of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Western dispensation outside Ethiopia, arrived here by train," Talbot reported in the *Ethiopian Herald*. "His Eminence Monsignor Lukas is founder and primate of his branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which embraces West Africa, the British West Indies and British Guyana. . . . His Eminence was received by His Majesty the Emperor last Wednesday in the afternoon."²⁶

In their meetings with the emperor and church officials, the West Indians requested for (I) the incorporation of the ECC into the EOC; (II) the recognition of Mar Lukas as a bishop; (III) the training of West Indians as deacons and priests in Ethiopian seminaries; (IV) the construction of an Ethiopian church cathedral and cultural center in Trinidad; (V) the deployment of student exchange programs; and (VI) the opening of consular ties.²⁷

Since the ambitious proposal dealt with more than just ecclesiastical matters, it was passed to the board of education (the branch of government concerned with social and cultural issues) for further scrutiny. Judging from the points raised in the petition, it was clear that the guests had overestimated the government's evangelical commitment and fiscal resources. They had, moreover, overlooked, if little understood, the controversial nature of their proposal as it would indirectly draw British involvement. Trinidad was still a British colony, and Ethiopia's implementation of the requests would have been an overt affront to the Colonial Office in London. With such concerns in mind, the board agreed to send a two-man fact-finding mission prior to any formal commitment. In October 1952 Mar Lukas and Springer were back on the high seas, homeward-bound, accompanied by the two Ethiopian envoys: Ato Abera Jembere and Fr. Gebre-Yesus Meshesha.²⁸

On the sixteenth of December, a date that has since marked the formal entry of the EOC into the Western Hemisphere, the four-man team disembarked to a euphoric welcome by hundreds of supporters in Port-

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of-Spain. Accompanied by their Caribbean hosts, Abera and Meshesha²⁹ traveled throughout Trinidad, Tobago and British Guyana preaching, baptizing, and even offering Amharic classes. Because of the throngs they attracted wherever they went, their actions were closely monitored for any signs of incitement. In Dutch Guyana, now Surinam, such fear of an antigovernment insurrection in fact resulted in the deportation of the Ethiopians and their associates back to British Guyana, whence they had come.³⁰

Abera returned to Ethiopia in the summer of 1953 with a written account of the mission's findings. His report to the board provoked two opposing responses. The more conservative members of the group saw the overseas missionary enterprise as too ambitious and costly, suggesting that such resources best be spent on the domestic expansion of Christianity. Their opponents, on the other hand, argued that establishing the EOC abroad would have a far-reaching effect on Ethiopia's international prestige, and that it would even propel the country into an esteemed leadership role in the black world. Being in line with Haile Selassie's overall Africa-oriented policy, the latter view finally prevailed, thus the decision to start an overseas branch.³¹ Meshesha was permanently stationed in Arouca, Trinidad, replacing Mar Lukas, whose spurious role had by now become apparent. Father Gebregziabihir Degou, another Ethiopian evangelist, was sent to head a similar mission in the nearby Georgetown, Guyana, while the name Ethiopian Coptic Church was abandoned in favor of the more appropriate Ethiopian Orthodox Church.³²

The church experienced its fastest growth in the early 1950s. By 1954 it had found permanent headquarters in Arouca on a parcel of land purchased by local members. Branches would soon sprout up at Claxton Bay, Sangre Grande, Point Fortin, and Scarborough (Tobago), and many more in the British Guyana. On the political front, too, the mission would score a major victory when, in 1955 and 1956, the hitherto hostile colonial officials in Guyana and Trinidad succumbed to activists' pressure, giving the EOC full legal status on a par with other religious bodies.³³

On the West Indian side, expectations of financial support from the parent church fed the air of optimism. For example, one letter from Guyana solicited the patriarchate's financial aid so as to make it possible for two local members to travel to Ethiopia to participate in the emperor's Silver Jubilee. "We are desirous of sending two delegates from the church in these parts. . . . We are requesting that you assist us with their return passage and accommodation for one week in Addis Ababa."³⁴

Given the patriarchate's shoe-string budget for overseas evangelism, the above request did not materialize. However, while the letter demonstrates the enthusiasm extant in the local leadership, a closer scrutiny reveals a wide disparity in what the Caribbean constituents expected and in what the mother church was in a position to deliver. The

discord between popular fantasy and actual reality was not without a serious ramification. In the fifties membership response to church needs may have remained positive, if not enthusiastic, with or without support from headquarters. But in the longterm, as the initial excitement wore off, those unwilling to own up to the challenges of the nascent sect would revert to other and more resourceful denominations, a problem that would continue to plague the church for decades to come.

The Pioneering Fathers

With little financial backup from the mother church, the resident priests were naturally expected to be resourceful and imaginative in their leadership. Yet, despite deserving an important place in EOC's history, Meshesha and Degou are little known beyond church circles. A brief description of their personalities and leadership styles is therefore in order here.

Gebre-Yesus Meshesha was born in Wagg, a district in western Wollo, on 25 March 1896 Ethiopian calendar.³⁵ Church education had always been popular among children of destitute parentage, since joining the priesthood was one way out of poverty. In that respect, there was nothing unusual about Meshesha's decision to immerse himself in religious training at an early age. What distinguished young Meshesha's excessive religious zeal was his travel north to Axum, home to the St. Mary of Zion parish, where he took a vow of celibacy. After a few more years in the Monastery of Abuna Andrias in the Italian colony of Eritrea, in the early thirties the undaunted youth set on foot on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land by way of Egypt.³⁶

In May 1936, while en route to England, Haile Selassie had spent a few days in Jerusalem beseeching divine intervention on behalf of his forlorn country. The pilgrimage took him to the monastery of Dar el Sultan, the site of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, where Meshesha and other monophysite monks were cloistered. The next year, Meshesha and three other priests received instruction from the emperor, then in Bath, England, to come to Europe and serve the exile community there. The Church of Medhane Alem, Savior of Our World, that was consequently founded in England would become the first of its kind in the West: a harbinger for the subsequent overseas expansion of Tewahedo.³⁷

As for Meshesha, the stay in Jerusalem and in England may have acquainted him better with the humdrum of life in exile, but otherwise had little consequence on his worldview because of his limited exposure to mainstream society. Once the war ended, however, his sojourn abroad was deemed significant enough to warrant his appointment as a senior cleric first in British-ruled Asmara and then in the distant West Indies.

The correspondence between the Trinidad-based Meshesha and the patriarchate in Addis Ababa indicates that Meshesha made few contacts



His Grace Abuna Athanasius, first archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Western Hemisphere

beyond his immediate circle. He spoke English of course, but found his mastery of the language somewhat wanting when it came to practical application. Because of the language barrier, he had to limit his liturgical role to administering the sacrament or leading prayer services. This meant he had to delegate most of the actual evangelical work to his locally born lieutenants, particularly to Springer and Modeste. In his letter of January 1954, which characterized the overall tone of his penmanship, he briefly discussed Mar Lukas' increasing marginalization, as well as the Christmas celebration at Arouca, his regional headquarters, supposedly attended by

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a crowd of five hundred. He later dwelt on his financial problems and his need for a car.

"My status in the Colony is not different from that of a bishop," he wrote. "I have three preachers (Springer, Modeste, and Adams) who live with me for the most part, and it is I who pays for their food and lodging, as well as for their transportation when we travel." The clergyman went on to complain about the hot climate and the speeding traffic, which often left him feeling sick and dizzy. "No self-respecting priest in this country is without a car," he lamented. "Whenever my hopeful followers ask me why I have no private transportation, I tell them I will soon own one. . . . Lest my poverty becomes a disgrace to my country's esteemed name, may your Holiness send me the funds for a new car together with my salary?"³⁸

Although the requested sum for a used automobile subsequently arrived, bouts of melancholy and financial anxiety would remain a recurrent theme in Meshesha's communication.

Degou could not have been more different in personality or in leadership style. Meshesha's junior by approximately twenty years, the Gondar-born Degou had modern as well as traditional schooling, spoke better English, and knew how to work with local officials. Then, too, was his acceptance of his missionary assignment with a genuine sense of commitment and not merely as patriotic duty. The letter he wrote to the vice patriarch, while en route to Guyana, reveals a humble yet optimistic man-at-arms. He did not know what awaited him in the new land and was not without some worries, he confessed, adding that he was prepared to face whatever challenges lay ahead with courage and happiness: "I do not have much to say in this letter; but may I throw myself at your feet and beg for your blessing and support as I set out for my mission?"³⁹

Degou traveled to Addis Ababa as a young man to matriculate at the prestigious Tefari Makonnen School only to experience a sudden religious epiphany that took him to Walduba to prepare for the afterlife. The famous monastery may have helped him refine his Orthodox theology, but his stay there was no where comparable to Meshesha's sojourn in Jerusalem or in England. All the same, Degou arrived in South America with single-minded determination and youthful enthusiasm, and the only complaint of his parishioners to the mother church was that they did not have a few more like him: "The various branches are clamoring for his service. . . . We beg of Thee to send us more priests and teachers."

Degou's efficacy as a preacher lay, among other things, in his receptiveness to new ideas. Incorporation of racial themes, although not always historically sound, rendered his teachings timely and politically relevant. His 1959 Christmas-day sermon, whose audience included government dignitaries like John Donaldson, the minister of Communication and Works, was not untypical of his oration. "The head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Trinidad issued a challenge



Aba Gebregziabihir Degou, (later Abuna Samuel), Ethiopian priest in British Guyana in the 1950s

at Mayaro on Sunday," a newspaper report of the gathering read. "He declared that the three Wise Men who brought gifts to the Christ Child were Ethiopians," Ethiopia being a generic name for black Africa. The paper went on to paint a romantic, if exotic, picture of the priest:

The Reverend Fr. E. Degou, Ethiopian-born priest, stood on a makeshift pulpit, a stone's throw from the popular resort bathing beach, and held service with hundreds of his faithful flock as they celebrated the Ethiopian Christmas five days late, so that those who were working could find time to celebrate. Looking picturesque in his multicolored robes, the thirty-two-year-old priest warned in his musical accent that he was not being racial. "This is history. If you have money, go to Ethiopia and see the monument of the Queen of Sheba there. . . . This is proof that the Wise Men came from Egypt. You have heard Catholics boasting

that Rome is the seat of Peter. Then we should boast that Egypt is the seat of Christ. The Baby Christ fled and stayed in Egypt till Herod died.”⁴⁰

Notwithstanding personality differences or even possible leadership rivalries, Degou and Meshesha complemented each other in their distinctly different public personas. Meshesha, despite an inert social life, maintained a commanding presence as a patriarchal figure, officiating over rituals and ceremonies. Degou, a go-getter, reached out to the masses from the pulpit as well as served as the media’s favorite liaison. As Ethiopians, moreover, both priests helped authenticate the West Indians’ sense of connectedness with Africa. With that, the new sect grew steadily through the fifties, claiming as many as “seven thousand” converts in Trinidad and several thousand more in Tobago and Guyana by decade’s end.⁴¹

Expansion and Challenges: 1959-1966

The inception of Melaku Bayen’s Ethiopian World Federation in 1937, imbued many New York blacks with a keen interest in Ethiopia in one form or another. Such was the case with Fr. John Divine Hickerson, a long-standing EWF activist. Hickerson had, through a series of correspondence with Ethiopian church officials, established his version of the Ethiopian church in Brooklyn, albeit of a Protestant congregation.

According to Yesehaq, Fr. Hickerson was “a man of vision who was responsible for the coming of the church to the West.” Among other things, it was through Hickerson that the Trinidadians came to know of Mar Lukas, the founder of the ECC there. In 1952, while en route to Trinidad, Abera and Meshesha met with Hickerson in New York, informing him of the EOC’s plan to establish a formal presence in the United States in the near future.⁴²

“Then in 1954,” writes Yesehaq, “Archbishop Theophilos visited the United States to reassure members that the promise would be kept, that the church would be set up, and that he himself would return.” Return he did, in October 1959, baptizing close to three hundred converts. Two parishes were established: Holy Trinity and St. Michael the Archangel. One convert, himself a preacher, donated his church at 720 Gates Street, Brooklyn, and the location became the seat of the St. Michael’s parish. Holy Trinity was housed in a rented property. While an arrangement for a priest was underway, a local Ethiopian student by the name of Lissane-Work Woubou was appointed as the acting secretary, with Bishop Y. Samuel of the Syriac church in New York as the spiritual advisor.⁴³

In November the archbishop flew from New York to Trinidad and Tobago, where he ordained twelve deacons, Springer and Modeste among them, and two priests: Qes Henry Blake and Qes Gebre-Yesus Turner. Unlike in New York, where few Americans outside the pro-African community showed interest in the prelate’s visit, in Trinidad his presence

attracted national attention and became a topic for lively media discussion. In *The Nation*, the official mouthpiece of the Colony's major political party, the Peoples' National Movement, question was raised about the identity of ancient Egypt and the nature of its links with Ethiopia. The paper upheld the view that Pharaonic Egypt constituted the pillar of African civilization along with Ethiopia. "It is known that Herodotus said point blank that the Egyptians came originally from Ethiopia," the paper went on. "The Bishop has informed us that in an Ethiopian legend . . . there were two brothers of one father: one of them founded Ethiopia and the other Egypt." Ethiopia and Egypt, the visitor added, enjoyed a common history and blood kinship at least until the latter's conquest by various forces outside Africa: Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks.⁴⁴

Although Theophilos' visit drew the fledgling diocese closer to the mother church, it had ominous consequences to the Caribbean mission. The establishment of new parishes in North America compromised the West Indians' monopoly of the patriarchate's overseas attention. The effect was visible as early as 1960 with Degou's transfer from Guyana to New York, leaving the South American mission at a standstill. To the patriarchate's credit, a certain Aba (father) Gebre-Hiwot was dispatched to Georgetown to fill the vacancy. But the new priest lacked his predecessor's health and buoyancy, his subsequent death under questionable circumstances marking him as the first casualty in the history of the overseas mission.⁴⁵

For the newly founded branches in New York, nothing could have been more opportune than the appointment of the vibrant Degou as the head priest. Having arrived in New York in September 1960, he proceeded to organize the administrative body of the church, which comprised a twenty-four-person general council and a seven-person board of trustees. He introduced Amharic instruction in Sunday school as well as created several interest groups for women, the youths, and outdoor evangelists. This last group was known as the Divine Army, which went from street to street preaching the Gospel and raising funds for the church.⁴⁶

According to Degou's correspondence, the church served as a sanctuary for many African students who sought warmth and solace in its bosom. The African presence in the church, Degou argued in his letter, bore immense significance to the EOC's missionary vision:

Presently, we have student members from Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Somalia. It is the conviction of these students that the Orthodox Faith become Africa's religion. Who knows, some of these members might hold important public offices when they return to their countries, as a result of which their joining our church might in many ways benefit Ethiopia. . . . In the short term, the presence of Africans in our church would help us gain more converts in the black community. Moreover, since there exists a pervasive belief about Ethiopians not wanting to

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be associated with blacks, our embrace of Africans would help offset such stereotypes.⁴⁷

But for all its far-sightedness and a clear sense of purpose, Degou's leadership was a one-man show. When, in 1963, Degou left for Germany and then the Soviet Union to study theology, the mission in New York soon fell in disarray. In both parishes membership plummeted drastically, the St. Michael's parish losing its premises for defaulting on its mortgage.⁴⁸ Even more shocking was the tragic circumstances that befell the substitute priest. No sooner had *memhir* (teacher) Gebre-Selassie Gelagay put on the leadership mantle than a quarrel with his landlady resulted in a note of eviction from his apartment. The frustrated priest tried to end his life by drowning himself in the icy Hudson River. Rescue came but not soon enough to reverse the water's hypothermic effect that necessitated the amputation of both legs. The convalescent *memhir* was subsequently recalled to Ethiopia, once again leaving the New York mission in a state of uncertainty.⁴⁹

The mid-sixties therefore represented the lowest point in EOC's North American experience. Only the appointment of Laike-Mariam Mandefro, later Archbishop Yesehaq, would save the fledgling mission from total extinction.

Laike-Mariam Mandefro came to the United States in 1962 under fortuitous circumstances. He was on staff at Holy Trinity College in Addis Ababa when he, together with seven others, qualified for the opportunity to study in America. The scholarships were offered by Michael Hatchman, or Gebre-Kristos Michael as he was known in Ethiopia. A realtor by profession, Hatchman was one of the early New Yorkers to embrace the Tewahedo faith and serve as an active member in Degou's inner council. Posing as a priest and accompanied by an assistant, he arrived in Ethiopia equipped with counterfeit signatures of several thousand names, supposedly his parishioners, in the vain hope of having himself consecrated as bishop by the Holy Synod. The patriarchate, unaware of Hatchman's scheme, concluded the request for the bishopric was too premature, but agreed to bestow the title of archimandrite on him in lieu of his impressive credentials.⁵⁰

Once in America, the eight students not only discovered Hatchman to be an imposter, but also found his psychopathic personality unbearable and his scholarship promises hollow. After a brief stay in Buffalo, New York, where they were temporarily enrolled in English language classes at the University of Buffalo, they dispersed to various academic institutions through their own efforts.

Mandefro and Gebre-Medhin Gebre-Yohannes, later Abuna Paulos, joined the St. Veladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in the outskirts of New York City. From there, Mandefro would continue to serve in the nearby Ethiopian parishes in his spare time, and upon the completion of

his education would take full charge of the missionary work in North America.⁵¹

In his mid-thirties, Mandefro brought with him a youthful vitality and the unique ability to listen and empathize, qualities that resonated the combined personalities of Meshesha and Degou. Under his tutelage, revived interest in the church resulted in the establishment of a new center, the St. Gabriel Mission in Brooklyn, as well as in the relocation of the Holy Trinity parish into a newly purchased building in the Bronx.⁵²

The mission in America boasted of no more than several hundred members even in the best of times. Still, the property in the Bronx filled its members with institutional pride and would serve for the next three decades as Yesehaq's operational headquarters. In the longterm however, acquisition of the church building, the first of its kind in North America, would prove to be a thorny issue in parent-child church relations.

According to Ethiopian sources, the Bronx building was purchased in 1969 with a government-guaranteed loan of 73,600 birr,⁵³ of which the sum of 66,018.91 birr remained unpaid by 1982 (1975 Ethiopian calendar).⁵⁴ According to Yesehaq, however, the building was purchased for \$50,000, with the Ethiopian government footing a bill for \$32,000 in the form of an interest-free loan. Under the Marxist government several years later, the parish found itself being held responsible for an accumulated backlog of interest that totaled almost 75,000 birr, even though the principal balance was by then paid. The controversy over the property would indeed exacerbate ongoing tensions between Yesehaq and the Marxist junta. But by then, as we shall examine in subsequent sections, Yesehaq had emerged as the most influential Tewahedo priest in the West, responsible for the founding of several additional church branches throughout the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean.⁵⁵

The Royal Visit

The 1960s was a remarkable decade for the Third World as it marked the end of colonialism. In Africa, the "winds of change" not only swept the European powers out of the continent, but it also resulted in the creation of the OAU with its permanent headquarters in Ethiopia. Unlike the forties and the fifties, the political developments of the early sixties brought no new stimuli to the Ethio-Caribbean religious dialogue. To the contrary, this period posed the church in the West Indies its most critical challenge.

The missionary zeal of the fifties had run its course by the early sixties, and internal squabbles over "seniority and nationality" had begun to take their toll. The vague criteria by which members were promoted to offices during the recent visit by the vice patriarch was specially divisive. Springer and Modeste, the two founding members, were recognized as deacons while two of their junior colleagues were elevated to the level of



Prayer service at the Medhane Alem Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Arouca, Trinidad, in honor of Haile Selassie's visit to the island nation. From left to right: Aba Fikre-Mariam Warqneh, Aba Gebre-Yesus Meshesha, Haile Selassie, Governor-General Sir Solomon Hachoy

priesthood. Adding to this complication was the fact that one of those two priests, Gebre-Yesus Turner, was a Jamaican national.⁵⁶

Personal rivalries, together with charges of moral and financial impropriety, created a rift in the diocese. Springer left for Barbados, where he lived for several years in self-imposed exile, while a number of influential members like John Donaldson quietly withdrew their support from the mission. Disparaged by the turn of events, in 1963 Meshesha too left for Ethiopia for what then seemed to be a one-way trip.⁵⁷

Two factors reversed the church's ebbing fortunes. First was the March 1964 visit to Ethiopia by Dr. Eric Williams, Trinidad and Tobago's first post-independence prime minister. Williams' visit, a prelude to the establishment of the Trinidadian embassy in Ethiopia, created a special moment in the two nations' diplomatic annals. Notwithstanding Trinidad's self-image as a secular multicultural society, Williams' confab with Patriarch Basilios underscored the centrality of religion in Ethiopian-Trinidadian ties. In the wake of the prime minister's visit, the patriarchate reinstated Meshesha to his post in Trinidad along with two additional priests: Fikre-Mariam Warqneh, bound for Tobago; and Hadis Gidey, successor to the late Gebre-Hiwot in Georgetown, Guyana.⁵⁸

The second revitalization factor was Haile Selassie's April 1966 tour of the West Indies. The emperor's week-long travels in Trinidad, Jamaica,

and Haiti marked the high point in the history of the Ethiopian-Caribbean connection. Each island's unparalleled lavish welcome, the extensive event-by-event media coverage of the tour, and the peoples' tumultuous outpouring of love and adulation, made the monarch the most popular man of his time there. For Jamaica's Rastafarians he was a messianic figure, Christ incarnate. For the rest, he was a mystical African king who, forsaken by the great powers in the thirties, stood as the lonely voice of international conscience and justice.

News of Haile Selassie's impending arrival to Trinidad and Tobago catapulted Meshesha and his church into the national spotlight. For instance, of the several articles devoted to Ethiopia in the 17 April issue of the *Trinidad Guardian*, one focused entirely on the history of the EOC mission: "Ethiopia invaded Trinidad and Tobago about thirteen years ago. Not with armed warriors. Not with troops of conquest." The Ethiopians, the article continued, "came clutching the Cross, preaching the Gospel, and fired by a missionary zeal to unite all African brethren in one religious body." Ever since 1952, the article further added, the EOC has made "great strides in this country of many races and many creeds." The paper estimated fourteen thousand as the total number of the EOC followers in the various branches in Trinidad and Tobago.⁵⁹

Unlike any previous event, the royal visit made the ancient church the center of media attention. After the airport formalities at Piarko, Haile Selassie and the governor-general, Solomon Hochoy, rode in a motorcade to the Medhane-Alem Church at Arouca for a prayer service in Ge'ez and Amharic. Another church ceremony involving the emperor and Prime Minister Williams included laying a cornerstone for the construction of an Ethiopian cathedral on a government-provided lot in the outskirts of Port-of-Spain. Such media-oriented fanfares gave the church much wanted public exposure and brought to climax the longstanding religious love affairs between Afro-Trinidadians and the Monophysite sect. If Abera and Meshesha's landing in Port-Of-Spain in 1952 marked the birth of the EOC in the West Indies, Haile Selassie's historic tour likewise reinforced the conviction that the Ethiopian church was there to stay.⁶⁰

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14. Yelvington, "War in Ethiopia and Trinidad," 222-223; Friday, "Impact of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis on Trinidad," 86, 100, 113-115.
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16. Ibid., 114-116.
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22. Author's private interview with Rev. Garnet Springer (Qes Abraham), 21 December 1996 and 4 January 1997; Millett, "Brief History of the EOC in Trinidad," 55.
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24. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 197-198; Getachew Haile et al., *The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia: Papers from a Symposium on the Impact of European Missions on Ethiopian Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 134.
25. Interview with Springer.
26. See Appendix A.
27. Millett, "Brief History of the EOC in Trinidad," 62.
28. Author's private interview with Ato Abera Jembere, 2 and 9 August 1996.
29. In Ethiopian church tradition every baby receives a baptismal name during the christening ceremony. Baptismal names are normally hyphenated words. The suffix is a proper noun: the name of a patron saint or angel, while the prefix describes the baby's relationship to its patron. Gebre-Yesus means the work of Jesus, Gebregziabiher the work of God, Haile-Selassie the power of the Trinity, Wolde-Gabriel the son of Gabriel, etc. Baptismal names are invoked in special circumstances such as when one is being prayed for by a priest. Church clerics, however, often adopt their baptismal names as their surnames. To avoid long and difficult to pronounce hyphenated names, the priests in this chapter are referred to by their last names even though Ethiopians as a rule attach more importance to the first name. So, Degou Gebregziabiher will be referred to as Degou, Meshesha Gebre-Yesus as Meshesha, etc.
30. Interview with Abera.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. See Appendix C.
34. Ibid.
35. The Ethiopian calendar (E.C.) is behind the Gregorian or Western calendar by seven years and nine-and-half months. The date 25 March 1896 would therefore translate roughly as the first week of April 1904 G.C. Ethiopian dates are used here for conformity and only when Western dates are not provided in the original documents.
36. For a biographical sketch on Gebre-Yesus Meshesha, see "Ye Bitsuh Abuna Athanasius Ye Hiwot Tarik," *Dimtse Tewahedo*, 30 March 1975 E.C.
37. Haile Selassie, *My Life and Ethiopian Progress*, 38-39.
38. Gebre-Yesus Meshesha to Abuna Basilios, 10 January 1946 E.C.; EOC files (henceforth EOCF) 1292. Translated into English by the author.
39. Gebregziabiher Degou to Archbishop Theophilos, 27 December 1947 E.C., EOFC 2687. Translated into English by the author.
40. "The Three Wise Men Were Ethiopians," *Trinidad Chronicle* 13 January 1959.
41. Ibid.
42. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 191; interview with Abera.

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43. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 191-192; Gebregziabiher Degou to Patriarchate, 30 February 1953 E.C., EOCF 2687.
44. "Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands," *Nation: Organ of the Peoples' National Movement*, 4 December 1959. For a better understanding of Ethiopian Christianity and its history, the archbishop donated a church "manuscript," excerpts of which were published in subsequent issues of the paper.
45. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 200.
46. Gebregziabiher Degou to Patriarchate, 30 February 1953 E.C., EOCF 2687.
47. Gebregziabiher Degou to Patriarchate, 30 June 1953 E.C., EOCF 2687. Translated into English by the author.
48. Gebregziabiher Degou to Patriarchate, 1 November 1963, EOCF 2687. Memorandum from Lisanu Habte-Wold to Archbishop Theophilos, 9 November 1956 E.C., EOCF 2687.
49. Author's telephone interview with Abuna Yesehaq, 19 August 1998 and 2 September 2003.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Laike-Mariam Mandefro to Theophilos, 25 August 1967, EOCF 1292.
53. For the period from 1974 to 1991 one U.S. dollar is equivalent to 2.07 birr or Ethiopian dollar.
54. See Patriarchate to Yesehaq, 9 November 1975 E.C., EOCF 1292.
55. Interview with Yesehaq.
56. Millett, "Brief History of the EOC in Trinidad," 67.
57. Gebre-Yesus Meshesha to Patriarchate, 10 December 1960, EOCF 2687.
58. "Dr. Eric Williams Bids His Imperial Majesty Farewell," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 19 March 1964; see also Simeneh Bekele (Patriarchate) to the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago, 8 October 1965 E.C., EOCF 1292.
59. "They Came Clutching the Cross: The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Makes Great Strides in Trinidad," *Trinidad Guardian*, 17 April 1966.
60. Ministry of Information, *Janhoy Be Karibian Desetoch*, 1-3; Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 197-198.

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In line with the discussion in the previous chapter, the Tewahedo Church arrived in the New World to fulfill the Africa-oriented diasporan groups' popular desire for an African faith. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, the catalysts were local agents whose quest for an authentically African spiritual identity led them to Ethiopia. One result of establishing the EOC in New York was Archbishop Theophilos' visit, and the Ethiopian government could be credited as having taken the initiative. Only in Jamaica, home of the Rastafarians, was the EOC invited simultaneously by both the populace and the government.

Jamaican interest in African Orthodoxy can be traced to the late fifties, particularly to the correspondence between Cecil Gordon, president of the Kingston-based branch of the Ethiopian World Federation, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Responding to a letter of inquiry from Gordon, in May 1960 Theophilos wrote, "We are fully sympathetic towards the ideals and aspirations of your people, and we may inform you that His Holiness the Patriarch with the Holy Synod will take the necessary steps in the matter of establishing the ancient Apostolic Church there." A missive of similar substance was dispatched to Gordon a month later, this time from Lissane Work Woubou, the acting secretary in New York, reiterating the above promise in general terms.¹

At the official level, Jamaican interest in Monophysitism coincided with the 1961 fact-finding mission to Africa, whose purpose was to study the feasibility of Rastafarian migration. In light of several recent messianic episodes, in which rumors of a miraculous deliberation to Africa abounded, Prime Minister Norman Manley penned an earnest letter to the patriarchate explaining the susceptibility of many Jamaicans to the Tewahedo creed. "In this country, Jamaica, there are tens of thousands of people who hold Ethiopia, its Sovereign, its church, and its Government in the highest esteem. . . . I speak on behalf of the Government of Jamaica when I invite Your Holiness to take steps to establish the church in Jamaica."²

Once again, the Ethiopian reply came in noncommittal terms. "We are very much interested in this proposal, and the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian



Aba Laike-Mariam Mandefro (later Abuna Yesehaq) receiving a warm welcome on his first trip to Kingston, Jamaica

Orthodox Church is at present considering the subject in all its aspects," read Basilios' rejoinder.³ Having recently ascended to full primacy, Basilios perhaps had personal reasons for his measured response. Committing a mission to Jamaica would involve taking a clear stand regarding the debate about Haile Selassie and his purported divinity, and doing so would entail the almost unthinkable task of delving into the details of the emperor's personal life and mortal birth. On top of that, Manley's request arrived at the least opportune moment, when the missionary zeal had already shifted from the islands to North America, and when there was neither money nor personnel for further expansion.

Ironically, contrary to the positions held by the Ethiopian World Federation and by Manley's government, few Rastafarians showed any inclination toward Orthodoxy at this early stage. Rastafarians, although revering Ethiopia as the Promised Land, rejected any doctrinal association with Monophysitism because of its failure to recognize Haile Selassie's apotheosis. Only the emperor's historic visit to Jamaica, where he promised to establish religious and educational links between the two countries, would soften such a knee-jerk response. After years of preparatory work by the New York-based Mandefro, in conjunction with the local chapter of the EWF, the first branch of the apostolic Church

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was established in Kingston in 1970 under the sanctuary of the Ebenezer Methodist Church.

Equally unique was the manner in which the Tewahedo mission was received among high-ranking Jamaican officials. When the EOC first arrived in Trinidad and Tobago in 1952, it had roused deep suspicion among the colonial officials and was received coldly. Now that the colonial factor was gone, the Jamaican officials' reaction to the inception of the church was exactly the opposite. Unlike the traversals that Abera and Meshesha had faced decades earlier, Mandefro received the most cordial cooperation. On 14 May 1970, he and his two assistants (Deacon Petros Tomlin and Brother Gabre-Hiwot Cameron) arrived at Palisadoes to an awaiting throng of hundreds of enthusiastic supporters and several prominent civic and government officials. Soon to meet with the priest was the opposition party leader, Michael Norman Manley, of whom more will be discussed below.⁴

Although family association had galvanized Jamaica's fledgling party politics, by the early seventies differences between the Peoples' National Party and the Jamaican Labor Party had become distinct enough to be defined in philosophical terms. While the JLP, despite its name, identified with the pre-independence elite and planter aristocracy, PNP politicians made common cause with the working class, the urban youth, the unemployed, the black power nationalists, and the Rastafarians.

The PNP found its standard-bearer in Michael Manley who, having succeeded in his father's footsteps as a populist politician, epitomized Machiavellian statesmanship on the one hand and a controversial liberal ideology on the other. Manley and associates had Jamaica House in mind when they organized a reception in honor of Mandefro. They hoped to cash in on their connection with Ethiopia and draw the marginalized masses into the PNP ranks in anticipation of the 1972 election.⁵

Ethiopia and Haile Selassie would indeed feature prominently in Jamaican electoral campaigns even if for the least expected reason. In 1969 Manley had flown to Addis Ababa in part to visit his brother Douglas, an employee with the United Nations, and in part to impress his Africa-oriented constituency with his own pan-African commitment.⁶

He returned from Ethiopia with what would soon become his priceless possession: a royal staff, a gift from the emperor. Christened the Rod of Correction, the stick became Manley's inseparable companion and the party's unique trademark in its campaign against corruption. Wherever the opposition leader went, the "Rod of Correction" followed. According to one writer, "The superstitious peasants and Rasta sufferers turned out by the thousands to kneel and kiss the relic, tearfully thanking Michael as if he were Joshua reincarnated." The PNP, out of power since Norman Manley's 1962 defeat by JLP's strongman, Alexander Bustamante, had made a grand come back, and "Manley was a virtual shoe-in due

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to his canny adoption of the Rod of Correction as a symbol of the moral rearmament he supposedly wished to bring to Jamaican society.”⁷

In 1972 Manley ousted Bustamante’s protege, Hughes Shearer, in a landslide victory at the polls. Inspired by Fidel Castro’s egalitarian Cuba, where universal education and free health care guaranteed a higher living standard, Manley espoused a socialistic economic philosophy at home, while pursuing pro-Soviet and pro-African postures abroad. He had been in office only for a few months when he officially received the New York-based Ethiopian priest. “The following morning (May 19, 1972), we visited the Prime Minister at Jamaica House and discussed with him the establishment and development of Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jamaica,” Mandefro writes. “The probability of having the Amharic language and African culture taught at all levels in the various educational institutions throughout the island was also discussed.”⁸

Although secular in outlook, Manley understood the potential of the Tewahedo dogma as a vehicle for positive social change. He anticipated a unique role for the church as a reformatory institution because of its assumed credibility with the Rastafarians. Manley and his party hoped the church would use its pro-African image to reach out to the nationalistic element of Jamaican society, and in so doing serve as a deterrent force against the supposed moral degeneration of the under-class; its proclivity for crime, violence, drugs, and other social evils. From the mayor of Kingston, Counsellor Eli Matalon, to the governor-general, Sir Clifford Campbell, who volunteered to serve as the patron of the new church, Ethiopian Christianity was hailed as an antidote to Rastafarianism. By exposing the inconsistencies between the Rastafarian dogma and the doctrines of Ethiopian Christianity, it was hoped the EOC would exert a dissuasive sway on the pro-Haile Selassie sect. Expectations were such that analogies were even drawn between the EOC and the Moravian church, a denomination renowned for its pioneering missionary work among Jamaican slaves more than a century earlier.⁹

Mandefro, whose fervor to spread the faith would prove irreplaceable, spearheaded the missionary work. In the process of recruiting converts, the *memhir* was often confronted by individuals who insisted on being baptized with no name other than Ras Tafari. “It was an extremely sorrowful and unforgettable moment for me at the registration meeting at Ebenezer Church, especially when some Rastafarians angrily demanded to know, ‘Who is Christ?’”

The archimandrite, who initially knew little about Rastafarian belief and philosophy, writes that persistence and empathy gradually turned the tide in his favor. “As was mentioned previously, a few of them were annoyed that the teachings of the church were not in accordance with their own desires. Nevertheless, as I had come from Ethiopia I was welcomed to teach the right doctrine of Christ and thousands accepted the faith.”¹⁰

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A defining characteristic of Ethiopian Christianity had been its laissez-faire attitude toward traditional practices, which often resulted in the incorporation of local customs and belief systems. In Jamaica, too, this same open-door policy facilitated the rise of a syncretistic sect, the *Ortho-Rastas*, i.e., Rastafarians who combined Selassie worship with Tewahedo mores. By the time Manley's party ousted the incumbent Labor Party, there were about three thousand members of the new church, most of them Ortho-Rastas, and the number would grow steadily in conjunction with Abuna Theophilos' visit to the island a year later.¹¹

Theophilos and the 1973 Visit

Theophilos made his international debut in 1948 as one of the founding members of the World Council of Churches. His subsequent visits to the United States and to the West Indies inspired interest in Ethiopian Orthodoxy, hence the establishing of several more parishes. In 1973, having succeeded the recently deceased Basilios as patriarch, Theophilos once again visited the West, honoring an invitation by the National Council of American Churches. Such was the importance the patriarchate attached to the trip that accompanying Theophilos were a half dozen notables, among them, the information minister Blatien Geta Mahateme-Selassie Wolde-Mesqel, the Trinidad-based Bishop Athanasius (the former Gebre-Yesus Meshesha), Bishop Mekarios of Gojam, the interpreter Ato Getaneh Bogale, and the seminarian Gebre-Medhin Gebre-Yohannes. Bishop Mekarios would succeed Abuna Tekle-Haimanot in 1987 as the fourth patriarch; and Gebre-Medhin, who was then finishing a doctorate in theology at Princeton and had only joined Theophilos' entourage as its record keeper, would replace Mekarios as Abuna Paulos in 1991.¹²

The visit, which was meant to coincide with a gathering in New York to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the WCC, extended to nine American states and three Caribbean nations. Its American highlights included an appearance at Boston University, where Theophilos was conferred with an honorary doctoral degree, a breakfast invitation from law makers in Washington, as well as several meetings with influential African American groups.¹³

The main reason for the trip, besides attending the WCC conference, was to raise funds for EOC's outreach program. To that effect, the patriarch identified a major problem plaguing the image of Christianity in Africa, namely its association with colonialism and wrongful portrait as the white man's religion. To make Christianity a self-reflective institution among peoples of color, he proposed the promotion of the Ethiopian church on the basis of its unique history and continental image. Just as the capital city of Ethiopia had become the home of the OAU, so could the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in cooperation with sister churches elsewhere spearhead the process of African religious revitalization.¹⁴

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Theophilos' week-long travels through the West Indies became a watershed point surpassed only by Haile Selassie's historic trip seven years earlier. In Jamaica, he attended an open-air mass with thousands of followers and donated \$1000 for church building. In Guyana, he promised to work toward the opening of a seminary that would prepare young men for the priesthood and offer Amharic classes for everyone. In Tobago, where the patriarch was presented flowers by a 107-year-old elder, Theophilos lectured on the history of the Ethiopian church that reportedly left the audience in "tears."¹⁵

The patriarchal visit to the West Indies was remarkable for several reasons. First, it was preceded by a major development a year earlier: the consecration of Fr. Meshesha, henceforth Abuna Athanasius, as the bishop in charge of the Western diocese. Second, coming as it did only seven years after the historic appearance by the emperor, the patriarch's visit was a powerful reminder of the ever deepening spiritual bonds between Ethiopia and a segment of the Caribbean populace. Third, Theophilos' historic visit marked the coming of age of the Ethiopian church in the New World. It elevated EOC's ecumenical standing in the Caribbean Council of Churches and, in so doing, revived anew its missionary fervor.

In the missionary spree that followed, new branches sprang up in the smaller Caribbean islands of St. Thomas, Bermuda, and St. Kitts, as well as in the major cities of North America with a viable West Indian presence. If the African church ever claimed something akin to a golden age in the history of its overseas mission, it was in the first half of the 1970s. The EOC had thenceforth become a truly hemispheric phenomenon, its presence extending from Toronto in the north to Guyana in the south, from New York in the east to California in the west.¹⁶

The Revolution and Its Aftermath

In a dramatic turn of events that followed months of political unrest and a ravishing spell of famine that left tens of thousands dead, Haile Selassie was dethroned by a group of military officers, the Derg, on 12 September 1974. The King of Kings, almost senile at the age of eighty-two, was shoved into the back seat of an old Volkswagen and driven off to an army barrack where he remained under strict custody until his death a year later. Gone was the monarchy and its role as "defender of the Faith," and with it the age-old intimate alliance between church and state.

The new government did not stop at that. In order to destroy any vestiges of the imperial past, former ministers and top officials were imprisoned or executed. Among such victims was the patriarch himself. Arrested on 18 February 1976, Theophilos joined several former top officials as a prisoner in the palace basement. Finally, on 14 July 1979, he and two other notables (Pastor Gudina Kumsa, head of the Ethiopian Lutheran Church, and Ato Haile Fida, founder and leader of the All

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Ethiopian Socialist Movement) were taken to a secret location and executed.¹⁷

Naturally, the usurpation of political power by self-declared atheists had a disquieting effect on the clergy. One such individual, whose tragic death further illustrates the disorientating nature of the revolution, was Gebregziabihir Degou, then Archbishop Samuel of the southern diocese. After his return from years of missionary work in the Americas followed by university studies in Europe, Degou had risen through the ranks, achieving the office of the bishopric by 1972. Sometime in 1976, just as government censure of Theophilos began, Degou was found dead from a gun-shot wound in his Ziway headquarters, apparently an act of suicide.¹⁸

At the institutional level, first to fall victim to the Derg's anticlerical policy was the EOC's overseas mission. Under the Marxist regime the church had neither the political will nor the financial means to back its New World evangelism. Interactions were kept so minimal no top-ranking EOC official ever visited the West Indies for the entire period the Derg was in power.

Evident of the synod's dwindling authority overseas was the increasing intradiocesan rivalry between New York and Trinidad. Since the late sixties, leadership jockeying had been apparent between Bronx and Arouca, where Mandefro and Meshesha were stationed respectively. The regional rift became more pronounced after 1974 as both priests carved out spheres of influence. Being where the EOC first took root, Trinidad and Guyana, Meshesha's stronghold, enjoyed a showcase status, having more resources at their disposal. Through the late sixties Gebre-Yesus Meshesha and Fikre-Mariam Warqneh were stationed in the sister islands of Trinidad and Tobago, while Haddis Gidey remained active in nearby Guyana until his death several years later. When Fikre-Mariam left for Ethiopia in the early seventies, in his place came two young monks, priests Wolde-Gabriel Wolde-Selassie and Haddis Gessese, to serve as assistants to Meshesha.

Jamaica, on the other hand, despite a much larger population, was never assigned a full-time cleric. Mandefro, who still shuttled between Kingston and the Bronx, had to use his personal connections to recruit a certain Deacon Tsegaye Wolde-Tekle and bring him to Jamaica as instructor of Amharic classes. Jamaica, however, for all its treatment as an underdog, would surpass Trinidad as the main evangelical center by the mid-seventies, with thousands of additional converts each year.¹⁹

In 1979 Mandefro succeeded the retiring Meshesha as Archbishop Yesehaq. Relations between him and the priests in Trinidad and Guyana remained relatively cordial for a while. Collaborative efforts in fact resulted in the expansion of the church building in Arouca, which then

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played host to the 1982 intradiocesan conference, whose guests included President Ellis Clarke of Trinidad and Tobago.²⁰

Perhaps inspired by the 1982 spirit of interregional cooperation, a similar concerted effort during the 1984-85 African famine succeeded in marshalling resources at an unprecedented level. From Trinidad and Tobago alone, a check for 88,000 U.S. dollars was delivered to the patriarchate in person by Deacon Tekle-Mariam Greene of Port-of-Spain, accompanied by Qes Misale Engida of Toronto. Patriarch Tekle-Haimanot would recognize the exemplary gesture, sending a letter of gratitude to Yesehaq, with copies dispatched to the various branches.

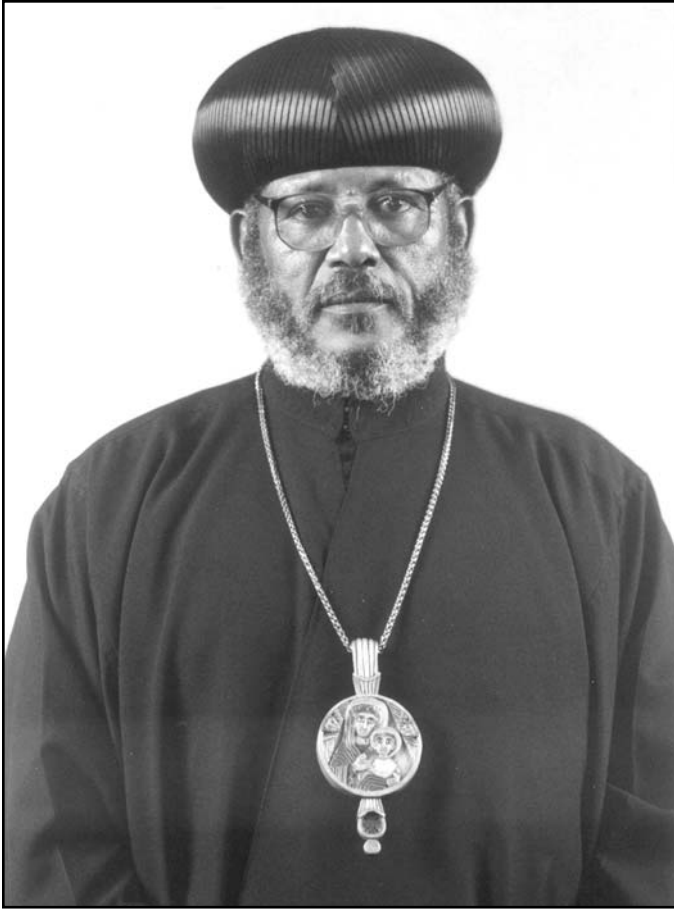
Intradiocesan tensions along the Toronto-New York- Jamaica axis on the one hand, and the Trinidad-Tobago-Guyana formation on the other, flared up once again in the late eighties. Father Wolde-Gabriel of Trinidad and Father Haddis Gessese of Tobago had been in their current posts for over a decade with no opportunity to visit their home country. On top of homesickness, they may also have perceived the transfer of the headquarters from Arouca to Bronx as compromising their power base, while Yesehaq may have read their aloofness and lack of communication as a sign of disloyalty.

Such bottled up feelings ruptured into the open in October 1989, involving a media free-for-all. "The two Ethiopian-born African priests have hijacked the TT branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of the Western Hemisphere," one circular accused, adding that "the church's New York-based Archbishop Abuna Yesehaq has threatened to post them straight back to Ethiopia, Africa, or transfer them elsewhere if they don't behave and stop acting as 'gods'."²¹

As it turned out, the above incident was only a foretaste to a much more serious crisis that would beset the institution in years to come. The fractious nineties plunged the patriarchate at large into an unparalleled leadership turmoil from which the church would never fully recover. The 1991 overthrow of the Marxist junta by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of so-called liberation forces led by the Tigrean Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), provided the context for the synodic strife. The Derg, however anticleric and antireligious, was cautious enough not to meddle directly in church politics. On the other hand, EPRDF restructured the church leadership in order to bring it in line with its policy of Tigrean ethnic hegemony. Accordingly, it replaced the reigning patriarch, Archbishop Mekarios, with a new priest of its choice, namely the Tigrean-born Archbishop Paulos. Since a new patriarch is appointed only with the death or retirement of the existing primate, the consecration of Paulos was condemned by most as intrusive and uncanonical.

In the case of Yesehaq, refusal to recognize the new Abuna left him permanently estranged from the patriarchate. The Western archdiocese

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Abuna Thadeus: Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Caribbean and South America

was split into three dioceses so as to weaken Yesehaq's power base. Aba Wolde-Gabriel of Trinidad, now Abuna Thadeus, was placed in charge of the Caribbean and Latin American parishes, while Abuna Matheas and Abuna Yohannes officiated over the North American and West European divisions respectively. Holding defiantly to his title as the only lawful archbishop of the Western Hemisphere, Yesehaq retained the loyalty of a large number of followers in New York, Jamaica, and of thousands of Ethiopian exiles. The church in the West thus became divided against itself: one faction rallying behind Yesehaq and the deposed patriarch, the other faction supporting and supported by the Ethiopian government.

Continuity and Transformation

Although political events in Ethiopia had direct bearing on the progress of New World Orthodoxy, by the 1990s the Ethiopian church in the West had grown complex enough to have its own internal dynamics. The Ethiopian church has been in Trinidad and Tobago for fifty years and in Jamaica for thirty years. The discussion about continuity and transformation, although still too premature to consider fully at this point, need some consideration here.

An impressive feature of Ethiopian Christianity in the Caribbean is in fact its literal transplantation, from the burning of incense at the altar, to the adoption of church chants and drumming, to the learning of complex liturgy by the Western-born clergy. Church articles including vestments, calendars, decorative artifacts, and anointing oil are brought from Ethiopia. Western-born clerics in general learn the mechanics of church service while working as assistants to the Ethiopian priests. Some of them, like Qes Tekle-Mariam Greene and Qes Abraham Springer, have visited Ethiopia and gained firsthand knowledge of the country and its people. These, along with visits by high-ranking church officials from Ethiopia, have served to reinforce continuity and adherence to traditional standards.²²

There is one area where an obvious form of digression can be said to have taken place. In Ethiopia Ge'ez, though little understood by the laity, is still the ecclesiastical language, in the same way that Latin was the liturgical language of the Catholic church. In the Caribbean and in the Caribbean-centered branches in North America, English and Patois have replaced the ancient tongue as the church media. Earlier on, church rituals were conducted in Ge'ez, but this has changed with the induction of local-born priests and deacons into the clerical ranks.

The embrace of local vernacular as church medium has not ruled out the infiltration of Amharic and Ge'ez vocabulary. The faithful are taught the Lord's Prayer in Amharic, and are also familiar with biblical terms such as Amlak (God), Menfis Qidus (Holy Spirit), Aba (father), misgana (praise), as well as with greeting expressions such as selam and Tena-Yistilign. In addition, members take pride in knowing the meanings of their baptismal names, most often derivations of compound words in Ge'ez.

As mentioned above, overseas Ethiopian church customs and rites have in themselves gone through few susceptible changes. Outside the church, on the other hand, Ethiopian religious icons have been adopted by the counterculture both in their original as well as interpreted forms. Because of the intimate association between Ethiopia and the Sufferers, Rasta artistic expression has increasingly taken on Ethiopian religious and cultural symbols. Ethiopian church paraphernalia such as the priestly garb, the traditional cross in the shape of various ornaments, and the

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makwamia (prayer stick), are no less ubiquitous than the Amharic script and the green-gold-red tricolor that have regularly appeared on reggae album covers.

The first reggae band to incorporate Amharic lyrics was the Abyssinians, whose 1969 single *Setta Masgana le Amlak Hul Gize* set a new trend in the evolution of reggae.²³ The Abyssinians extended reggae's syncretistic repertoire, one that many Jamaican artists have since found irresistible. *Setta Masgana* put in vogue Amharic catch words and phrases not just among reggae performers, but also among Rasta rank and file in Trenchtown, some of whom organized Amharic classes using U.S. foreign language military manuals and audio tapes.²⁴

On the downside, incorporation of Ethiopian church culture by reggae music and Rasta art has made it difficult for the EOC to present itself as a mainstream branch of Christianity. In Jamaica's case, the African mission had been welcomed to help reach out to the antiestablishment elements of society. In the eighties and nineties Jamaicans saw the church as having succumbed to Rastafarian influences instead of the other way around. The wearing of locks by the Ortho-Rastas and the church's open membership policy led the middle class to think of the church as a Rasta church and of Abuna Yeshehaq as a "rasta bishop."

The misperception has been further perpetuated by the media's portrait of the Tewahedo faith as a pro-Haile Selassie sect. In *Rasta and Resistance*, for instance, Campbell notes that the "Jamaican state encouraged this deification of Haile Selassie to the point where, for the first time in the history of the society, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was recognized as an authentic religious institution along with the Anglican and Roman Catholic institutions."²⁵ Timothy White also states that the Rastafarians' belief in Haile Selassie's divinity was shared by "the Ethiopian peasantry and their equally credulous leaders." According to White, "many of the heroic tales and supernatural abilities that surrounded Haile Selassie were reportedly concocted by the emperor himself and duly circulated by the central government and the Coptic priesthood."²⁶

An even more compelling explanation for the fallacious association between Rastafari and the EOC comes from *Bob Marley and the Wailers*, an authoritative biographical video. In this otherwise wholesome documentary, a group of Orthodox priests, including Abuna Yeshehaq, is shown presiding over the funeral rites of the deceased reggae star. What the video leaves out, and therefore most fans do not know, is Marley's conversion to Ethiopian Christianity several months prior to his death. On 4 November 1980, the internationally acclaimed reggae king, then wasting away from a terminal cancer, was baptized as Berhane-Selassie (light of the Trinity) by Abuna Yeshehaq at a New York hotel. His conversion was not made public for fear of repudiation by the hard-core Rasta community, for whom Marley had been nothing less than a prophetic figure.²⁷

The Church in the Nineties: Diagnosis and Prognosis

Two ongoing trends are discernable from the above discussion. On the positive side, because of the Rastafarian artistic factor northeast African crossovers have become more conspicuous in West Indian popular culture. On the negative side, in the strictly religious sense African Orthodoxy has maintained a peripheral presence in West Indian Christianity, in part because of the patriarchate's failure to pay adequate attention to the overseas mission, and in part because of the sect's close association with a counterculture, or Rastafari. In other words, although Tewahedo maintains a visible presence in the various Caribbean isles, it is yet to make a spearhead into the mainstream.

In fact, indications are that the appeal of Orthodoxy among West Indians has been on the decline for quite sometime. In Millett's estimation, in Trinidad and Tobago alone membership had fallen to about five thousand in the early nineties from an all-time high of about fourteen thousand in the mid-sixties. These figures, however arbitrary, indicate an ongoing downhill trend. Given the quick expansion of the EOC in Trinidad and Guyana in the fifties, or in Jamaica in the seventies, there are obvious questions to raise. Why did the church lose its early missionary momentum? What factors contributed to its decline?

As discussed earlier, the first initiative for the establishment of the EOC in the New World came from the West Indians themselves. On the Ethiopian side, the reasons for the missionary impulse were initially more political than religious. As such, the resource set aside for the purpose was little more than a token. The number of Ethiopian priests serving in the entire Western Hemisphere, for example, never amounted to more than a handful at any given time. Recruits lacked formal missionary training and, in some cases, spoke little English. With the exception of Degou's short-lived leadership, the EOC never developed a door-to-door outreach culture, a practice all too common in the Western churches. However well versed in traditional learning, the Ethiopian evangelists found themselves poorly prepared for the dynamic social lifestyle that their job in the New World dictated.

Inadequate fiscal resources posed perhaps the most formidable challenge of all. Longterm success of the missionary work demanded a solid and steady financial commitment that was beyond the means of the church or of the Ethiopian government. The total expenditure for the infant church in the West during the year 1947 (Ethiopian calendar) was a mediocre sum of 11,100 birr (about five thousand U.S. dollars), most of which went to pay Degou's and Meshesha's monthly stipends of 400 birr each.²⁸ Later on salaries were raised to 600 birr for the priests and 1000 birr for the bishop, still a paltry sum by Western standards.²⁹

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While West Indians held optimistic, almost naive expectations toward the Ethiopian government, the latter on the other hand regarded the islands as remote and insignificant. Other than facilitating Tewahedo's physical presence in the archipelago, the patriarchate did little to cultivate secular ties such as promoting cultural exchange programs. While Jamaica and Trinidad maintained consular offices in Addis Ababa, ironically the only Caribbean state with which Ethiopia maintained reciprocal diplomatic relations was Francophone Haiti, even though there were no religious ties between the two. Transaction between the patriarchate and its Caribbean missions was therefore slow as it often followed a circuitous route through the embassy in Washington. In one instance, a sum of twenty-five thousand birr, earmarked for land purchase in Tobago and Guyana, wound up in the personal bank account of Berhanu Dinke, the Ethiopian ambassador who later resigned his post and sought political asylum in the United States.³⁰

By the mid-1970s famine, war, and human rights abuse had become the distinct trademarks of the Ethiopian government abroad. So shattered was Ethiopia's overseas image that association with the country no longer meant an asset for politicians such as Manley. For the Marxist cadres in "Socialist" Ethiopia, ideological camaraderie, as seen in their country's congenial foreign policy toward Eastern Europe and Cuba, overrode the decade-long commitment to Afro-Atlantic solidarity. Religion was condemned as the opiate of the masses and, in cases of imported creeds such as the Protestant church, tolerance gave in to persecution. Although prudence prevented the Derg from directly interfering in church administration, it nonetheless pursued a very explicit anticlerical attitude.

Deprived of government support that the EOC had traditionally enjoyed, the patriarchate in Addis Ababa had neither the means nor the commitment to missionary work abroad. The late seventies and eighties moreover saw a shift in the EOC's overseas policy. With the influx of tens of thousands of Ethiopian refugees into North America, the primary reason for the church's presence in the West was now the need to cater to the sizable Ethiopian community there. This marked a radical departure from the missionary *raison d'être* of the earlier decades.

Under the atheistic Derg, no senior official visited the Western parishes, whose state of neglect and deterioration continued to worsen. Absence of close supervision by the parent church would inflict irreversible damage, as fractious local leadership put the entire moral standing of the church in question.

The final coup de grace came in 1991 when the new ethnocratic government began to meddle directly in church politics with far-reaching consequences. Mirroring the polarization of the patriarchate along ethnic lines, the faithful in the West were split into two camps: those in favor of

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the new government and its proactive religious policy, and those opposed to the government and its unwanted involvement in spiritual affairs.

If Abuna Paulos' 1995 travels in North America and the Caribbean represented a reconciliatory gesture toward the disaffected, the patriarch had underestimated the politically charged atmosphere of the moment. Unlike Theophilos' historic visit twenty-two years earlier, he was repeatedly met by angry crowds of antigovernment protesters, and his presence did more to renew afresh old acrimonies than to heal them.

Afterwards, the patriarch tried to revitalize the evangelization work by sending a hand-picked group of six priests to Barbados, where Zachariah Gibson, the general secretary in charge of the Caribbean and South American missions, was headquartered. If all had gone as planned, the group, after a three-month language training program, would have joined Gibson in establishing the first overseas seminary where Western-born clerics could be trained and ordained as deacons and priests. The project, the most ambitious since sending the fact-finding team to Trinidad in 1952, ended in farce when the entire team defected to the United States while in transit.³¹

Despite such attempts to revive the missionary heyday of the fifties, the church continues to suffer a steady loss of membership and esteem. This author attended the Ethiopian Christmas celebration in Claxton Bay, Trinidad, on 6 January 1997. The event, which included a night-long mass and a candle-light parade around the church, was supposed to be a major occasion, attended by a large number of members coming from various parts of the island. The celebration, presided over by Bishop Thadeus and his local-born assistants, attracted less than a hundred faithful. The author also visited the Holy Trinity Church in the nearby island of Tobago headed by an elderly Ethiopian priest, Aba Zenawi, successor to the deceased Haddis Gessese. The premise, once filled beyond capacity during Theophilos' 1973 visit, was now frequented by less than a score of regulars.

In Guyana, once an important missionary center, there had not been an Ethiopian priest since the departure of Mengiste Abebe, successor to Haddis Gidey, in the eighties, and the church is now headed by a local-born acting priest Ralph Adams.³²

As pioneer of the EOC mission in Jamaica, where the church still holds sway, Yesehaq continues to command respect and influence among the masses. His official position with the Jamaican Council of Churches (JCC), in which the EOC enjoys an observer status, remains precarious however. Since the 1995 visit to the island by Paulos, the JCC has distanced itself from Yesehaq. Although JCC's siding with Paulos seems to have resolved the succession impasse, it remains to be seen if the new patriarch would have as much following among the Ortho-Rastas of Jamaica.³³

In North America, the most vocal opposition to the patriarch came from the Bronx, New York, where a court case had long been underway

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between Yesehaq and Paulos concerning the ownership of church property. The building housing the Holy Trinity parish had been purchased by Yesehaq in the late sixties through a government-guaranteed loan from the Ethiopian National Bank. Since only a fraction of the loan had been paid in all these years, in August 1998 a New York court decreed that the building be turned over to the Ethiopian government. Naturally, the verdict came as a great shock to the West Indian worshippers without whom the church would not have existed in the first place. Members watched helplessly as armed policemen, invited by the plaintiff, violated the sanctity of their church, beating and arresting anyone who refused to vacate the premises.³⁴

Given the West Indians' strong attachment to Haile Selassie and his emissaries, association with the Ethiopian church may continue into the near future irrespective of such setbacks. In the longterm, however, the survival of the church in the Caribbean and in the Caribbean-centered communities in Europe and America hangs on several factors: establishing and maintaining positive rapport between the West Indian faithful and the Ethiopian government; reaching out to new members, especially women and younger adults; strengthening the nativization process by training more Western-born priests; launching intradenominational fellowships between West Indian and Ethiopian worshippers; and diffusing regional rivalry through representational and competent leadership.

Through such enlightened reforms, the Ethiopian church will not only provide an alternative religious outlet to those disenchanted with Euro-Christianity; it will also provide a framework for rejuvenating an Africa-centered spirituality amongst twenty-first-century diasporan blacks. Without such timely overhaul, however, the West Indian diocese may continue on its downhill spiral to an even bleaker future, and such an uncertain fate will in turn render this unique chapter in transatlantic religious ties into little more than a passing remark in the long and checkered history of pan-Africanism.

Notes and References

1. See Smith, *Rastafari Movement*, 41-42.
2. See Appendix D.
3. See Appendix E.
4. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 204-205.
5. David Panton, *Jamaica's Michael Manley: The Great Transformation* (Kingston: Kingston Publishers, 1993), 33.
6. Darrell Levi, *Michael Manley: The Making of a Leader* (London: Deutsch, 1989), 125.
7. Timothy White, *Catch a Fire*, 262.
8. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 214-215.

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9. Ibid., 212.
10. Ibid., 208.
11. Ibid., 214, 226.
12. See Paulos, *Theophilos*, 141.
13. Ibid., 141, 164-65, 173, 183.
14. Ibid., 150.
15. Ibid., 188-194; Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 217.
16. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 194-196, 230-231, 233-234.
17. Paulos, *Theophilos*, 198-207.
18. Two priests interviewed by this author agreed that Degou killed himself as soldiers surrounded his office in an effort to arrest him but refrained from giving any hint about the reason behind the suicide.
19. Tsegaye Wolde-Tekle to Patriarch Tekle-Haimanot, 9 November 1971 E.C., EOCF 1292.
20. See Appendix G.
21. "Rastas Hijack Church," *Blast*, 27 October 1989.
22. Misale Engida to Patriarchate, 6 February E.C., EOCF 1292; see also Tekle-Mariam A. Green to Ministry of National Security of Trinidad and Tobago, 30 January 1978, EOCF 1292.
23. A more correct version is *Sitt Masgana le Amlak Hul Gize* (give praises to God everyday).
24. Carol D. Yawney, "Rastafari Sounds of Cultural Resistance: Amharic Language Training in Trenchtown, Jamaica," in *African-Caribbean Religions: 2nd International Conference of the Society for Caribbean Research, Vienna, 1990*, ed. Mansfred Kremser (Vienna: Wuv, 1994), 33-48.
25. Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*, 127.
26. White, *Catch a Fire*, xv.
27. Davis, *Bob Marley*, 240.
28. Aba Hanna Jimma, Royal Treasurer, to Ministry of Pen, 16 September 1948 E.C., EOCF 2687.
29. Ermias Kebede, church treasurer, "Memorandum Regarding Salary Payments to EOC Priests in the West," 30 June 1967 E.C., EOCF 1292. Ermias Kebede, "Memorandum Regarding Salary Payment to Bishop Athanasius," 13 March 1964 E.C., EOCF 2546.
30. Solomon Gebre-Mariam, Director of Ministry of Pen, to Fitawrari Haile-Michael Zewde, Vice Minister of Government Treasury, 16 July 1957 E.C., EOCF 1292.
31. See Haile-Georgis Meressa, etc., to Archbishop Gerimma, 6 August 1988 E.C., EOCF 5811.
32. Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 200.
33. Murrell, *Chanting Down Babylon*, 174-175.
34. "Ethiopian Orthodox Church Under Siege," *Ethiopian Register* 5, 9 (September 1998): 19-22.

conclusion

Ethiopia has invoked various, often contradictory representations in Western intellectual discourse. The prevalent theme in Ethiopian historiography since the seventeenth century has been the externalist thesis, the depiction of Ethiopian history as more Middle Eastern than African. This perception of Ethiopia as a country *in* but not *of* Africa has been shared by a generation of Ethiopianists, herein referred to as Semiticists.

On the positive side, the Semiticists pioneered a systematic study of Ethiopian cultures and languages, and in so doing popularized Ethiopian studies as a genuine field of learning in some of the well-known Western academic centers. On the negative side, in reaction to the Semiticists' portraits of Ethiopian history as that of a superior immigrant race was born a deconstructionist-secessionist contention. While deconstructionists busied themselves dismantling the ideological superstructure of the Solomonic state, secessionists read the Ethiopian past as a history of colonial expropriation and formulated the political *raison d'être* of ethnic nationalism. Although the cultural bonds among Ethiopians have in the past withstood major national crises, including the five years of divide-and-rule under Italian occupation, the ongoing ethnic tension in the Horn is in part the making of the secessionist historiography, whose reason for being there is its antagonism to the Semitic outpost thesis.

Despite their apparent differences, the above schools share one thing in common, namely their subscription to a Hegelian or European-oriented worldview. Diametrically opposed to the Semiticist and deconstructionist-secessionist historiography is the African-centered school which seeks to place the Ethiopian past in a continental framework. The philosophical contention between the Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives lies in their contextualization of the early Axumite civilization. Whereas the externalist or European-centered interpretation attributes the rise of the Axumite epoch to colonial influence from South Arabia, the internalist or Afrocentric approach celebrates Axum as an autochthonous African state along with Egypt and Nubia. Although historians and linguists have revealed fundamental flaws in the European-centered worldview, the externalist paradigm still constitutes the dominant conceptual framework.

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Because of its antiestablishment position, the internalist antithesis is seen as an upstart at best, or as having little to contribute to existing knowledge at worst. Such marginalization of the African-oriented school has in turn resulted in a lopsided historiography that has given rise to unqualified national arrogance, as is evident in the Semiticist literature, or has become a breeding ground for narrow ethnonationalism, as is the case with the secessionist discourse.

What this study has therefore done is challenge received wisdom by taking the internalist argument a step further and by drawing a coherent picture of the pan-African ties between Ethiopia and occidental blacks. The first physical encounter between Ethiopians and overseas Africans goes back to the turn of the century when a Haitian adventurer, inspired by Ethiopia's recent victory against Italy, arrived in the court of Menilek II. Although Sylvain's proposal for establishing diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and Haiti found little success, his visit to the far-off country opened a new vista in transoceanic racial ties. Demonstrating this positive trend was the settlement in East Africa in the early 1930s by scores of black immigrants in response to the Ethiopian government's invitation.

A landmark event in the history of modern pan-African nationalism was the 1935 Italo-Ethiopian war. Prior to the 1930s, the connection between Ethiopia and foreign blacks was mostly a sentimental one, centered on Ethiopia's mythic image. After the 1935 crisis, the concept of Ethiopianism took a more practical twist, given the flow of more information and increased mutual awareness.

Italy's unprovoked invasion of the ancient African kingdom triggered a series of anticolonialist demonstrations throughout the colored masses worldwide. In what came to be regarded as a racially driven European attack on the historic African kingdom, diasporan communities constituted an important pressure group in the effort to liberate Ethiopia. Although they were denied the right to fight for the defense of their ancestral land by their respective governments, Caribbean and American blacks helped maintain the Ethiopian cause as one of the most pressing issues of the day through popular protests.

Ideologically, the Italo-Ethiopian war aroused various reactions among black intellectuals in the United States and in the West Indies. The war provided the black American left a historic opportunity to demonstrate its political sophistication and organizational skills. Hoping to create a united and class-conscious antifascist front, Harlem Communists coordinated an interracial Ethiopian defense campaign. By bringing together various pro-Ethiopian groups, ranging from progressive whites to right-wing Garveyites, they helped establish the United Aid for Ethiopia. Their success was short-lived however. As it became gradually clear that the primary focus of the Communists was the crises in Spain and

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China, there was a mass defection of blacks from the Party that put an end to its leadership role in the pro-Ethiopian agitation.

While the wartime pro-Ethiopian mobilization left no permanent imprints on black America, the same crisis was a critical point in transforming the West Indian intelligentsia from communism to black nationalism. Ethiopia's abandonment by the major powers, especially by the Soviet Union, which had until then stood out as a champion of anticolonialism, led many Caribbean thinkers to look inward. Even notorious Marxist ideologues such as Padmore, who had earlier spoken against race awareness as a bourgeois concept, would now emerge as the leading advocates of pan-Africanism. In August 1935 a group of West Indian radicals together with some Africans in London formed the International African Friends of Abyssinia. Reconstituted as the International African Service Bureau, in 1945 the group sponsored the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England, a watershed gathering that marked the turning point in the history of African nationalism.

The wartime mobilization also had lasting effects on the Ethiopian national psyche. The Ethiopians, who hitherto took pride in their insulated national identity, began to see themselves in a global racial context in the aftermath of the fascist invasion. While Haile Selassie resorted to classic diplomacy to advance the cause of his beleaguered nation, his cousin Melaku Bayen exploited the race card to rouse African American moral and material support for his native land. Melaku's vision of the Ethiopian World Federation as a mass movement, reminiscent of the UNIA decades earlier, ended abruptly after his death in May 1940. His pan-African cause was picked up by the British suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, who, through her extensive publications, championed the need for closer unity between Ethiopia and the larger African world.

Melaku as a black nationalist and Sylvia as a feminist leftist traversed distinct ideological paths. Yet, their vision of Ethiopia as a converging ground for modern African nationalism influenced subsequent political trends profoundly. With the establishments of the UNECA and the OAU in Addis Ababa in the late fifties and early sixties respectively, Ethiopia would become a major center of continental politics and its national university a hotbed of pan-African radicalism. Because of Haile Selassie's strong ties with the West, Ethiopian students saw the imperial government as a conservative, even reactionary, institution. Yet, when it came to African affairs, both the radicals and the monarchy made common cause to ensure that Ethiopia had the lion's share in the fight against colonial rule and apartheid. However opposite in their ideological visions, Haile Selassie and the young intellectuals worked jointly to undermine Ethiopia's psychology of insularity. They passionately advocated for greater participation in international politics, actively supported the Afro-

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Asian solidarity movement, and reaffirmed Ethiopia's racial ties with overseas blacks.

Whereas the postwar years marked the Africanization process of Ethiopian national consciousness, the same period witnessed the dissipation of Ethiopian symbolism from African American political thought. With the independence of several African states in the early sixties, and with the rise of a more articulate group of African nationalist leaders, black Americans no longer felt duty-bound in their support for Ethiopia. Moreover, from the late fifties on, most African Americans would become more inwardly focused because of the civil rights movement and the new prospect of political inclusion at home. Even before Ethiopia's plunge into cyclical famine and civil war in the mid-seventies, mainstream black American literati had thus lost much of its interest in Africa, with a few exceptions such as South Africa, where apartheid still made front-page news.

Only in the West Indies was pro-Ethiopian sentiment kept alive beyond the immediate postwar decades. The Rastafarians' steadfast belief in Haile Selassie as the Messiah and in Ethiopia as the Promised Land, transformed the age-old concept of Ethiopianism into something akin to Zionism, resulting in the repatriation of several Rastafarian groups. The West Indian trickle to Ethiopia, which gained momentum in the late sixties after the emperor's allocation of settlement land in Shashemene, has been plagued by problems of factionalism, leadership rivalry, and inadequate financial resources. Such setbacks have prevented the homestead community from becoming what its founders had envisioned: a self-reliant model community.

Since the land grant experiment has shown the impracticality of wholesale migration, repatriation has been redefined to mean a spiritual sojourn as opposed to a physical relocation. The Rastafarian motto "Repatriation is a must" and "Babylon is foreign" is no longer taken literally. Shashemene is now as much a state of mind as it is a spot on the map. It symbolizes a spiritual and cultural sojourn to the past, a reconnectedness with one's ancient roots. This redefinition of repatriation as a process of psychological and spiritual transformation has in turn resulted in the decision by a growing number of Rastafarians to retrace their ancestral roots not by settling in Africa, but by joining the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and by learning its culture and language.

Caribbean religious interest in Ethiopia began in the late forties. Following the landing of two Ethiopian evangelists in Trinidad and Tobago in 1952 the Monophysite Church established branches in the various Caribbean isles, picking up thousands of converts in the process. Compared to the mid-seventies, when overseas Tewahedo basked in the heights of its popularity, from the eighties on EOC's expansionist zeal would enter a period of stagnation. In the nineties, leadership rivalry and

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ethnic squabbles would pose further setback, a downward spiral from which the church is yet to recover.

Still, the transplantation of African Orthodoxy among Western blacks stands out in its historic significance for two reasons. First, at a global level it symbolizes the ongoing cultural dialogue between Africa and the New World centuries after the lapse of the transatlantic slave trade. Second, at the national level it debunks the myth of Ethiopia as a disinterested bystander in New World black struggle to reconnect and identify with Africa.

In conclusion, this study has investigated Ethiopia's multifaceted interactions with diasporan blacks. The work has identified three intertwined themes central to transoceanic racial links: pan-African nationalism, migration, and the search for religious common ground. These themes in turn indicate that, despite the absence of any physical contact prior to the twentieth century, over the last several decades Ethiopians and Africa-oriented New World blacks have cultivated a more than casual sociocultural bond.

Appendix A

“West African Prelate Arrives in the Capital for Visit.”

His Eminence, Most Excellency Rev. Dr. Monsignor Mar Lukas and his chaplain the Rev. Springer of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Western dispensation outside Ethiopia, arrived here by train Wednesday, August 6.

The ecclesiastical visitors were met at the railway station by his excellency Ato Tefarra Work, His Imperial Majesty's private secretary, and his assistant. They are staying at the Hotel d'Itegue.

The present itinerary of the visitors took them from British West Indies to New York, thence to London, Paris and Marseilles, where they embarked on ship for French Somaliland and then entrained for Addis Ababa.

His Eminence Monsignor Lukas is founder and primate of his branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which embraces West Africa, the British West Indies and British Guyana. “The seat was originally in Lagos, where it was established on September 12, 1947, but has been recently transferred to Trinidad, British West Indies,” said the Archbishop.

“The Lord has marvelously blessed the work so that now there are 43 churches and 6 schools. One of the schools in West Africa is named after His Majesty the Emperor and is known as the Emperor Haile Selassie I Intermediate School.”

His Eminence was received by His Majesty the Emperor last Wednesday in the afternoon. Summary reports of the activities of the Church were submitted to His Imperial Majesty, together with greetings from the thousands of its faithful.

The next day they were in confab with His Grace Abuna Theophilos and three other Bishops of the Ethiopian Church. “The reception was

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most cordial," declared Dr. Mar Lukas, "and encouraging comments were made on the activities of the Apostolic Mission outside Ethiopia."

The past weekend saw the prelates visiting the University College, the Princess Tsahai Memorial Hospital, the Ethiopian National Library, and motoring through the countryside.

His Eminence was born at Lagos, West Africa, and hails from Quartey of the Royal House of Accra. Rev. Springer is a native of Trinidad, British West Indies, and delegated by the Synod to accompany the Archbishop on this mission to Ethiopia as his chaplain.

Source: *The Ethiopian Herald*, 23 August 1952.

Appendix B

Majority Report

The Hon. N. W. Manley, Q.C.,
Premier of Jamaica,
Ministry of Development,
Kingston.

Dear Premier,

The unofficial Back-to-Africa Mission to Africa sponsored by your government traveled inside five African states and had talks with the heads of each state about "their migration policies and the possible movement of persons from this island to settle in these countries." The Mission found in all the territories a ready acceptance of the principle of "repatriation of Africans living abroad, to the ancestral land," as it was enunciated by the delegates on the Mission. Since the Mission was not empowered to enter into commitments with these African states, their governments declared their readiness to enter into discussions with your government so as to deal with the mechanics of future migrations. The Mission told the African governments that it did not believe it would be the policy of your government to burden their governments with all the financial requirements of any such migration.

Delegates on the Mission were Messrs. Filmore Alveranga, Douglas Mack and Mortimer Planner of the Rastafarian movement; Mr. Westmore Blackwood of the Universal Negro Improvement Association; Dr. M. B. Douglas of the Afro-Caribbean League; Mr. Cecil George Gordon of the Ethiopian World Federation Inc.; Mr. Z. Munroe Scarlett of the Afro-West Indian Welfare League.

Serving as advisers to the Mission were Dr. L.C. Leslie, medical practitioner who also acted as leader of the Mission; and Mr. Victor Reid, journalist and author.

The mission found that the skills of such Jamaican artisans as carpenters, masons, and mechanics were generally of a higher order than the African, and that there was a shortage of artisans in these states.

The Mission found that food production in most of the countries was (1) low and/or (2) often lacked variety. All of these countries, although lying in the tropical belt, were still importing sugar, but Ethiopia has a sugar factory turning out over 40,000 tons a year.

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The Mission found a desire, in the territories visited, for three departments of skilled immigrants:

- (a) Professional and technical
- (b) Artisans
- (c) Farmers.

The African hosts to the Mission all observed that persons entering Africa in any migration scheme should do so with the intention of becoming permanent residents in the country, and not as transients. The question of citizenship would present no difficulty, they pointed out, since special arrangements would be made in this connection. But the matter of assimilation would be of prime importance and it was recommended that this be considered for special study on both sides. On almost every occasion it was a point for earnest conversation that centuries of exposures to Western ideas and customs must tend to modify Jamaicans (and all the black people of the Western Hemisphere) into a way of life dissimilar to the African. Impatience with the African's traditions and customs, or too hard a try to "bring him into line" would wreck the finest efforts of the scheme. It could also operate the other way around.

It was therefore strongly submitted by some members of African governments that an advance "goodwill corps" from both sides, Jamaica and the African states, should be sent into the countries of source and destination, to study and to teach.

Commencing at Ethiopia where we remained for one week, the Mission went, in turn, to Nigeria (2 weeks), Ghana (1 week), Liberia (6 days) and Sierra Leone (1 week). Prior to this, on our way from Jamaica, we spent two days in New York and one week in London. Altogether, the Mission was away for 61 days. At all points, the courtesy and welcome was outstanding. In Ethiopia, the Emperor presented each member of the Mission with a gold medal and instructed that all expenses incurred in the country (including hotel bills) be paid by his government. The Abuna (or Archbishop) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church also received the Mission and presented each member with complete Ethiopian national costume. The Abuna, in making the presentation, said that he did not only give the robes to the Mission as gifts, but that they should all know themselves to be Ethiopians. At Freetown, in Sierra Leone, medals were also presented to the Mission by the Mayor and Council.

In Nigeria, members of the Mission were also each presented with a complete national costume by the governor general, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and twice was received by him at Government House.

The week that the Mission was in Ghana was also the occasion of the state visit by President Sukarno of Indonesia. However, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah twice received the Mission, first in the official talks and again as his guest at a private entertainment put on for the Indonesian president.

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The Mission was also the dinner guest of the president of Liberia, Mr. William V. S. Tubman at his private lodge outside Monrovia after our official talks in his office.

In Sierra Leone, Dr. the Hon. Sir Milton Margai, the prime minister, also entertained the Mission and a visiting trade mission from the United Arab Republic at a reception at the state residence which was attended by his cabinet, government officials, the diplomatic corps, and prominent persons in the country.

Of particular significance, the Mission considers, was the enthusiasm with which the African states marked this first serious exertion in a hundred years to activate the back-to-Africa idea cherished in many countries. The Mission found in Africa former West Indian, Brazilian, Mexican and American black nationals whose ancestors had been taken to Brazil, Mexico, the U.S. and the West Indies as slaves. The comment from these and from African statesmen was laudatory at the boldness and penetration with which the Jamaica government had tackled the idea.

One of the problems that should be investigated by the Jamaica government is the matter of land tenure. An example is in some areas where lands are vested in the tribal chiefs. However, at various countries where this situation holds, the Mission was assured that changes in these "native laws and customs" were contemplated so that the central governments would have the authority to deal with purchases and so on.

The Mission invited all the heads of state to visit Jamaica, and the invitations were accepted. The Mission also suggested the exchange of students between all the countries visited and the West Indies and the suggestion was accepted in each instance.

The report which follows turns on discussions which were held not only with government officials but also with private citizens.

The Mission is grateful for the opportunity afforded them to take part in this historic event and trusts that the results anticipated will be forthcoming.

Ethiopia

Our first contact with those sections of the continent of Africa towards which the Mission looked for the possible movement of persons to settle was Ethiopia. We arrived there on Sunday April 16.

We were met at the Addis Ababa airport with every courtesy by officials of the foreign ministry led by Ato Getaneh Haile-Mariam, chief of the English and Commonwealth Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and were put up at the Ghion Hotel, one of Addis Ababa's finest hotels. Lij Ayelework Abebe, a senior officer of the ministry, was detailed to look after the members of the Mission during their stay in Ethiopia.

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Slated for us were meetings with the ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Commerce and Industry, Agriculture, and National Community Development. At each of these meetings, our reasons for visiting Ethiopia were related by the leader of the Mission, Dr. Leslie, and further supplemented by remarks from other delegates. We were given very attentive and obviously sympathetic hearings by the ministers, who assured us that our proposals would receive their active attention.

While we awaited the summons from the Emperor, we were enabled by the attention of the government to see as much of the country, its institutions and life as was possible. Accordingly we made visits to such places as the famous cooperative farm at Awasa; Her Imperial Majesty's Handicraft and Technical School, the Debre Birhan Community Center; the Point Four Farm at Jimma; Wonji Sugar Estate; such works as the Koka Dam and Shashemene, the land the Emperor gave about 10 years ago for people of African origin domiciled outside the continent and who desired to return. Much talk and thinking has been directed to Shashemene by people in the back-to-Africa movements in Jamaica and we'll discuss it later in the Report. The Mission went by air to Jimma to see the coffee plantations there.

We were received by the Emperor in one of his palaces at Addis Ababa on Friday April 21. He welcomed the members of the Mission as "brothers of one blood and race." The purpose of the Mission was explained by Dr. Leslie. In his reply, the Emperor said that Ethiopia would always be open to people of African origin who lived in the West and who desired to return. It had been explained to him that this was an unofficial Mission, although sponsored by the Jamaica government, and the Emperor asked that a delegation of experts be sent from Jamaica to discuss the various facets of migration. His Majesty also hoped we would "send the right people." His Majesty also expressed eagerness for an exchange of students and scholars between his country and the West Indies and said he would instruct the minister of education to instantly explore the situation.

At the conclusion of the audience, the members of the Rastafarian group on the delegation presented His Imperial Majesty with the following gifts: (1) a carved wooden map of Africa with a painting of the Emperor done by Rastafarian brethren; (2) a number of photographs of Rastafarians and a painting of Navy Island also executed by Rastafarian brethren; (3) a red, green and gold scarf woven by Mr. Planner, one of the delegates and a portrait of His Imperial Majesty in military uniform painted by Mr. Sporty Green, a Rastafarian.

The climate of Ethiopia is equable for Jamaicans. Ethiopia lies closer to the equator (5 degrees) than Jamaica (15 degrees) but it is mountainous enough to produce a climate mostly remindful of Mandeville. From Addis Ababa, which is over 8,000 feet above sea level, the land falls away to the warmer coastal areas. Rainfall over the whole huge country is adequate

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(high: 61, low: 34), and helps to provide the striking agricultural potential that leads an official Ethiopian government release into stating: "There are vast areas of agricultural land which afford ample reserves for future expansion."

The Emperor, after it had been drawn to his attention that our people were skilled in sugar cane cultivation and sugar manufacture for over 300 years and had also been foremost in its establishment in Cuba, urged the members of the Mission to visit Ethiopia's lone sugar estate and look at the works. Ethiopia, up to a few years ago, imported all its sugar. It still imports the large percentage, but there is a very modern sugar factory at Wonji which makes around 40,000 tons a year. Jamaica mills out some half million tons a year.

Of approximately 400,000 square miles in extent, Ethiopia has a population of 22 million people. A point of comparison: Jamaica has 1.5 million on 4,000-odd square miles. The West Indies has over 3,000,000 on 8,000 square miles. This means the Jamaica (and the W. I.) population density is some 60 times greater than Ethiopia's.

The Emperor at his audience told the Mission that "Ethiopia will grow anything"; cattle, sun-flower (for oil), sugar cane, cotton, bananas, vegetables, coffee, cereals, and pulses all thrive through the lush countryside. Last count has the cattle population at over 23 million head. Sheep number over 22 million and goats over 16 million.

Coffee originated in Ethiopia and the fine "arabica" type grows so wildly that it forms part of the underbrush in the forests. Varieties are plentiful and coffee bean to over 13 million pounds sterling was exported in 1959. There are now coffee cooperatives functioning. The establishment of other cooperatives is proceeding. Says a government statement: "We could undoubtedly increase coffee production by establishing large organized plantations and by encouraging the people to set up small plantations." The Mission pointed out that Jamaicans were longtime coffee growers and could aid in the expansion of the crop.

Food supplies are relatively cheap and plentiful and provide the working class Ethiopians with a diet that is rich in carbohydrates but said to be short in fats; although by expert accounts, it is adequate in vitamins. At any rate, the medical people queried, observed that the nutritional status was good, that there was no malnutrition in the children, and members of the Mission testify to the tastiness of the Ethiopian national dish: the Injera and Wat (Injera is a pancake-like soft bread made from a vegetable extract called Teff; Wat is a meat sauce with red peppers, onions and other spices).

Housing is in short supply and expensive in some categories. Migrants would be encouraged to make full use of the unlimited supply of clay and timber available for building purposes. Indeed, a sturdy example

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is witnessed at Shashemene, the first or "pilot" settlement attempted by West Indians in Ethiopia.

Shashemene, a beautifully rolling country lying between the Malkoda and Shashemene rivers, on the lower slopes of the Addis plateau about 160 miles from the city, was years ago designated by the Emperor as a giftland to colored peoples of the West desiring to settle in Ethiopia. This was confirmed to the Mission by His Imperial Majesty the Emperor, Haile Selassie himself. James and Helen Piper were originally from Montserrat. After living in New York for some years, where they were members of the Ethiopian World Federation Inc., they migrated to Ethiopia in 1948: James Piper taught carpentry in the technical school at Addis until 1952 when he returned to New York. A year later he was back in Ethiopia on a decision to take up the offer of lands which had been made through the EWF.

In the company of a small group of West Indians and Afro-Americans, which included a Jamaican girl, Julia Green, formerly of Annotto Bay and Dr. David Talbot of British Guyana (now adviser on English publications with the Ethiopian Ministry of Information), they explored the countryside until they came to Shashemene. There they settled, living in a hastily thrown up mud-hut until they had built their present comfortable bungalow. Only the Pipers are still at Shashemene (they are now Ethiopian citizens). They farm scientifically, and also run a cornmill, grinding the neighborhood corn for a fee. They are happy and prosperous. They own about 50 head of cattle, corn and sunflower fields, a goat herd. "The land at Shashemene could take many, many more families," Helen Piper said. "We'd like to see more West Indians here."

At present there are not many industries in Ethiopia but the country is being geared to industrialization. There are canning and button factories, textile factories, a brewery, cigarette, cement, soap and matches factories. Mining is limited but the government operates two gold mines and a platinum mine. Oil is being sought.

Wages permit adequate purchase of basics but little luxuries (example: a chauffeur earns 10-15 pounds a month; carpenter 20-25 a month). The Mission believes that the potential for migrants to Ethiopia lies in agriculture. But in this field, the potentials are vast. Schools and medical facilities are widening. The language barrier, if it exists, is not formidable. English is the lingua franca of the country (indeed, of all West Africa, too).

On one point the Mission would like to make an observation. There has been a notion, spread by certain publications and touted by many non-Africans that the people of Ethiopia, and the Emperor, consider themselves above and apart from the peoples of Central Africa, the so-called "negroids." Nothing of the kind has been observed by the Mission on their visit to Africa. The people of Ethiopia live in equality and concord. Said the Emperor at the last meeting of the Independent African

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states held in Addis Ababa: "Socially and culturally, we must develop those natural bonds of our people to each other that have been stretched and weakened through the fragmentation of our continent by the colonial practices of divide and rule. We must see to it that history of each other of our peoples is known to the others and appreciated throughout the continent."

A point of interest is that on Friday April 21, two members of the Mission, Mr. Cecil Gordon and Mr. Z. Munroe Scarlett, were baptized into the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by His Holiness, Abuna Basilios, Primate of Ethiopia, Bishops Theophilos and Paulos, Bishop of Jerusalem. Mr. Gordon represents the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc., and Mr. Scarlett is administrator of the Afro-West Indian Welfare League.

Source: *Report of Mission to Africa* (Kingston: Government Printer, 1961), 1-6.

Appendix C

Ethiopian Orthodox Church
B.G. Mission, P.O. Box 606
Georgetown, British Guyana
August 11, 1955

To His Holiness Abuna Basilios
Archbishop of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

Your Holiness,

Greetings in our Father's holy name.

By now, you will have learned that the prayers of your people in this distant land have been answered. We have, with God's help, been able to achieve the incorporation of the British Guyana Mission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It has not been a very easy task, but it could be that the Almighty had a hand in it and we were able to succeed.

Your letter to the Governor of the Colony was taken to him by Dr. C. H. Denbow who arranged that, at a convenient time, His Excellency the Governor would receive the Reverends Meshesha and Degou in audience. Dr. Denbow then interviewed the Honorable Attorney General of the Colony of the British Guyana who, not only gave a valuable advice, but also helped in drafting the necessary legal instructions for the incorporation of the church.

At this time, the priests were received in audience by the Governor. They were escorted by Dr. Denbow and were given a very cordial interview by the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, who recalled having met you in Jerusalem where he was in Finance Department during the War.

The motion of the incorporation was at first moved in the local legislative council by the honorable W.O.R. Kendell, the minister of Communication and Works. But as a member of the government, he had to withdraw and Mrs. G. Collins, an original member, presented the bill and carried through all the stages. Two weeks after its passing it was given the royal assent and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became a legal entity in British Guyana.

Having crossed our first hurdle, you can no doubt realize, holy father, that our battles are not yet over. We have to build up our church communities.

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We have nine active branches at present, separated by great distances. Fr. Meshesha is in the neighboring island of Trinidad, and Fr. Degou is here with us. He has to conduct services, baptisms, and teach Amharic. The various branches are clamoring for his service. The members want him in several places at the same time. We beg of thee to send us more priests and teachers. Our people are poor but they are willing.

Already some have made sacrifices by giving land for the building of church and school. Two small churches have been built already. We cannot keep pace with the demand. The government has given us one piece of land for the central church, and another piece has been promised us that we have to build. We need the prayers as well as the material support of the mother church. We need financial help to put up our church buildings.

We are not unwilling to help ourselves; we are doing so now, but at a pace too slow for the future welfare of our church. Our enemies are many but we pray to Almighty God to protect and help us in our honest endeavor as we go forward bearing ill will to no one.

The Silver Jubilee of His Imperial Majesty would take place in November-December of this year. We are desirous of sending two delegates from the church in these parts. Our objective is that, by their presence in Ethiopia, they will be able to present to the mother church a timely picture of our position here. We shall need your help in making it possible for these delegates to travel. We are requesting that you assist us with their return passage and accommodation for one week in Addis Ababa.

The eyes of whole Caribbean territories are on us. The first mission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to be incorporated, we are conscious of our responsibilities and, with your prayers and help, we hope to succeed.

In our Holy Father's name, I am your obedient son,

Claude Jonas

Source: Ethiopian Orthodox Church Files, 5811; Claude Jonas to Abuna Basilios, 11 August 1955.

Appendix D

Office of the Premier
24 East Race Course
P.O. Box 512
Kingston, Jamaica
July 25, 1960

Your Holiness {Abuna Basilios},

I have the honor to address you on the question of establishing a branch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jamaica.

In this country, Jamaica, there are tens of thousands of people who hold Ethiopia, its Sovereign, its Church and its Government in the highest esteem. The affection and reverence for the country is so great that many have adopted the belief that the Emperor Haile Selassie is a divine person.

It is my firm opinion that there can be few places in the world where the ancient Apostolic Church in Ethiopia would make more rapid progress and would make a greater contribution to religious development based on the sacred principles on which the Church was founded. I speak on behalf of the Government of Jamaica when I invite Your Holiness to take steps to establish the Church in Jamaica.

I do not believe that this can effectively be done by any local person attempting to create a local organization. I firmly believe that the best hope of success will require that the Church should send a mission to Jamaica to start this great work. I give the assurance that such a mission would be welcomed by the Government and welcomed by the people and would do a great deed to this country at this time.

I forward this request for your most favorable consideration and would be gratefully obliged for an early answer to what I have set forth.

I have the honor to be Your Holiness' obedient servant.

N.W. Manley
Premier

Source: Ethiopian Orthodox Church Files, 5811; Norman Manley, Premier of Jamaica, to Patriarch Basilios, 25 July 1960.

Appendix E

P.O. Box 1178
Addis Ababa
28th November, 1960
Patriarchate

His Excellency N.W. Manley
Premier of Jamaica
24 East Race Course
P.O. Box 512
Kingston, Jamaica

Your Excellency,

We sincerely thank your Excellency and the Government of Jamaica for the kind letter dated 25th July, 1960, inviting us to take a step to establish a branch of the Ethiopian Holy Orthodox Church in Jamaica. We are also grateful to you for the assurance of welcome to a mission from our Church to your country.

We are aware of the fact that a section of the people in your country wish to become a member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As you have stated, the Church will be able to make rapid progress and make a great contribution to the religious development of the people of Jamaica.

We are very much interested in this proposal, and the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is at present considering the subject in all its aspects. As soon as the Synod arrives at a decision in this matter, we shall write to you about it. Thank your Excellency and the Government of Jamaica once again.

Yours in our Lord,

Aba Basilios
Patriarch of Ethiopia

Source: Ethiopian Orthodox Church Files, 5811; Patriarch Basilios to Prime Minister Norman Manley, 28 November 1960.

Appendix F

This is an excerpt from the speech delivered by Haile Selassie at the U.N. General Assembly in New York City on 6 October 1963, and not, as commonly believed, in 1968. The speech, which ranks second in importance after the historic deliberation in Geneva in 1936, has gained immortality when Bob Marley adopted it, with some modification, as lyrics for his 1977 hit, "War."

Will and Determination

Last May, in Addis Ababa, I convened a meeting of heads of African states and governments. In three days, the thirty-two nations represented at that Conference demonstrated to the world that when the will and the determination exist, nations and peoples of diverse backgrounds can and will work together, in unity, for the achievement of common goals and the assurance of that equality and brotherhood which we desire.

On the question of racial discrimination, the Addis Ababa Conference taught, to those who will learn, this further lesson:

- that until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned;
- that until there are no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation;

- that until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes;

- that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all, without regard to race;

- that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but fleeting illusions, to be pursued but never attained.

And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and in South Africa in sub-human bondage have been toppled and destroyed;

- until bigotry and prejudice and malicious and inhuman self-interest have been replaced by understanding and tolerance and goodwill;

- until all Africans stand and speak as free beings, equal in the eyes of all men, as they are in the eyes of Heaven;

- until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary, and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil.

Source: *Important Utterances of H.I.M. Emperor Haile Selassie I 1963-1972*. Addis Ababa: the Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information, 1972.

Appendix G

Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Western Hemisphere
140-142 West 176th St.
P.O. Box 292
Bronx, NY 10451
Aug. 31, 1982

His Holiness Abuna Tekle-Haimanot
Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Holiness,

May we greet you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God.

We your spiritual children in the Western Hemisphere would like to inform you of the following:

The Fifth Western Hemisphere Conference of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was held in Trinidad and Tobago from August 22-31, 1982. During this time the conference discussed, among other things, our church Expansion and Evangelism, Education, Publication, Inter-Church Relations and Finance.

At the formal opening of the conference the new Medhane Alem Church was officially dedicated by His Eminence Abuna Yesehaq. His Excellency Dr. Ellis Clarke, president of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, declared the conference open. The Honorable Dr. Cuthbert Joseph represented the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago and on his behalf laid the corner stone of the church. Many senior government cabinet ministers along with the heads of many religious denominations were in attendance.

We feel that by sending this report your Holiness will be well informed of the activities that are taking place in the Western Hemisphere diocese.

Your humble son in Jesus Christ

Kes Tekle-Mariam A. Greene
General Secretary
Western Hemisphere Conference

Source: Archbishop Yesehaq to Patriarch Tekle-Haimanot, 31 August 1982.

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Since 1896, the year in which Ethiopia scored a major victory against an invading European army, occidental blacks had been fascinated with East Africa, the land whose history resonated a racial golden age. Through subsequent decades Ethiopia remained a powerful signifier in modern black thought, while Ethiopianism became the catalyst of 20th-century nationalist expressions.

Modern Ethiopianism is, however, much more than a quest for an idyllic past. Given the state-of-the-art means of communication, Ethiopia is no longer a far off abstraction. Modern Ethio-Atlantic racial ties are articulated by tangible historical events. The manifestation of Ethiopian art in Reggae, the Rastafarian deification of Haile Selassie, and the transplantation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Western Hemisphere, are but a few examples of Ethiopian cultural crossovers in the New World. Inversely, black American Soul and Jamaican Reggae have spiced up Ethiopian urban culture, as have their political heroes and sports icons.

Bond without Blood constructs the narrative of the Ethio-Atlantic ties with three interwoven themes in mind: pan-African nationalism, repatriation, and cultural cross-fertilization. The overall thesis that holds this book together is that contemporary Ethiopian and New World black relations are more than a mere psychological preoccupation. East Africa and the black Atlantic, despite great physical distances, continue to impact on each other's awareness through migration, religion, secular culture, as well as through a shared history of anti-colonial activism.

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